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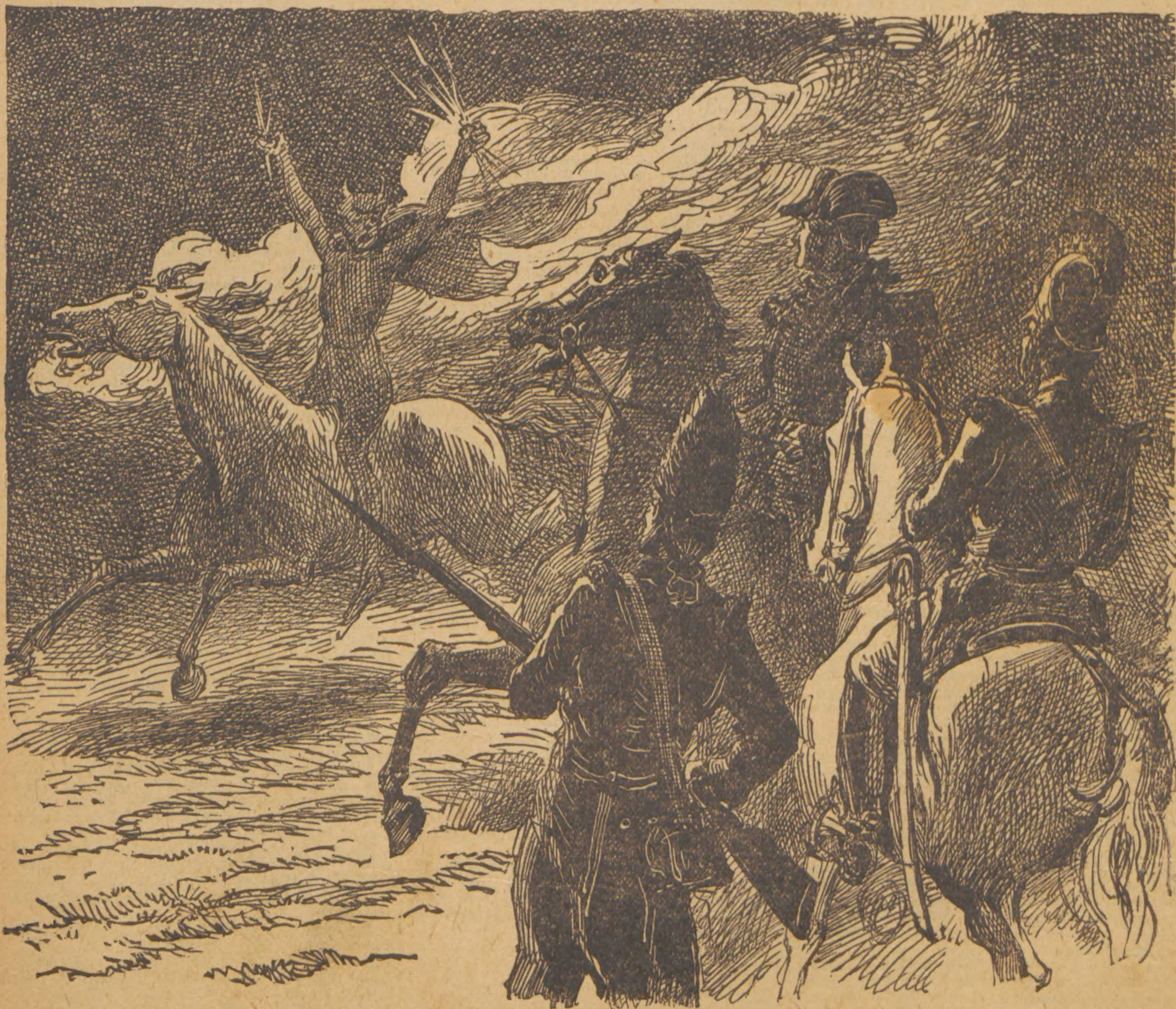
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BLACK NICK, The Demon Rider; or, The Mountain Queen's Warning.

BY CAPTAIN FREDERICK WHITTAKER.,
AUTHOR OF "THE DUMB PAGE," "DICK DARLING," ETC., ETC.



ON A BLACK HORSE, FLAMES AND SMOKE PROCEEDING FROM HIS MOUTH, WHILE A STREAM OF SPARKS CAME FROM THE MUZZLE OF HIS HORSE.

3.00

Black Nick, The DEMON RIDER;

OR,

The Mountain Queen's Warning.

A Story of the Great Campaign.

BY CAPT. FREDERICK WHITTAKER,
AUTHOR OF "THE DUMB PAGE," "DICK DAR-
LING," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THE WOOD FIEND.

In the midst of the lonely forest that stretched in an almost unbroken line of solitude from the head-waters of the Hudson to the Mississippi, during the last century, a small party of Indian warriors in full war-paint, treading one in the other's footsteps, to the number of five, stole into a little clearing formed by the hand of Nature, and halted by a spring.

The sun was about to set in an angry glow of crimson that portended bad weather. The fiery beams shot aslant through the open arches of the forest, and the trunks of the trees stood out as black as jet against the red glow of evening.

"He has not been here," remarked the warrior who seemed to be the leader, as he scanned the earth around the little spring with a practiced eye.

"The pale-faces are all liars," said a young brave disdainfully, as he leaned upon his bow. "When was a Mohawk known to break his word?"

"The Panther Cub is wrong," he said quietly. "There are good and bad pale-faces. I have never known the white chief to fail before. He has been stopped on the way. He will soon come and show us how to strike the children who have rebelled against the great father who dwells beyond the sea."

"The Mohawk needs no white teacher," returned Panther Cub in the same tone. "I can find a house to strike, and scalps to take, long before the morning dawns, if need be."

"Has the Black Fox lost his eyes, that Panther Cub thinks he is the only Mohawk that can see in the night?" asked the old chief sternly. "Let the young warriors be silent while they have chiefs on the same war-path. We have eaten of the white father's bread, and he has ordered us here to await his messenger. Black Fox will stay."

As he spoke, he leaned his rifle against the tree by which he stood, drew up his blanket around his shoulders, and took his seat in dignified silence.

The other warriors, as if determined by his example, proceeded to make their dispositions for the night. A flint and steel were produced, tinder was found in a dead tree, and a small glowing fire was soon started, around which the Indians clustered, eating their frugal meal of dried venison and parched corn in silence.

These Indians were a small scouting-party from the flankers of Burgoyne's army, who had been dispatched through the woods to the west of Albany to meet an emissary of the British Government, who was to give them certain instructions.

Slowly the sun disappeared as they clustered round the fire, and the crimson glow died away in the sky, to be replaced by a murky mass of cloud of dark slaty gray, rapidly becoming black. Overhead the stars shone out, but the clouds began to gather and hide them from view and a low moaning in the tops of the trees warned the hearers of a storm brewing.

Suddenly, as if by common consent, every Indian sprang to his feet and grasped his weapons, as the sound of snapping sticks, and of horse-hoofs in rapid motion approached the spot. There was no underbrush in those primeval forests, as yet innocent of the ax of the woodman, and a horseman could be seen in full career, rapidly approaching the little glade.

At a word from the chief the four warriors resumed their seats by the fire, while the old leader himself stalked forth from the group, and drawing himself up, awaited the coming of the stranger in an attitude of dignity, grounding the butt of his rifle.

The new-comer proved to be a man of large size, with a stern, determined face, gloomy andowering in expression. He was dressed like a farmer, and well mounted on a stout horse, carrying holsters on the saddle from which peeped the butts of large pistols. Otherwise the rider

was unarmed, only carrying a horse-whip. He checked his horse and dismounted before Black Fox, who addressed him with the grave reminder:

"The Night Hawk is late."

"I couldn't be earlier, Fox," returned the other, in the Mohawk tongue. "I was fired at by Schuyler's pickets, and chased out of my path by a patrol of the cursed mounted rifles of that fellow, Morgan. Here I am at last. Go back to the general, and let him know that the rebels are rousing everywhere. Schuyler has sent orders to rescue the fort beyond Oriskany at any cost, and they will march in two days from now, a thousand strong, under General Herkimer, to raise the siege. Have you a swift runner here?"

"The Panther Cub has long legs. He shall carry the Night Walker's words," said the chief, sententiously.

"Good. Let him run to General St. Leger, and warn him that his rear will be attacked," said the spy. "For the rest, back to Burgoyne. Tell the general his foes are gathering. He must spring like the wild-cat, or he will be trapped like the beaver. Tell him I will bring him more news by way of the lakes, and that—"

"HA! HA! HA! HA! I GATHER THEM IN! I GATHER THEM IN!"

The interruption was sudden and startling. A loud harsh voice, with an accent of indescribably triumphant mockery, shouted these words from the midst of the intense darkness, which had crept over the scene during the short conference, since sunset. At the same moment, out of the opening of a hollow tree that stood near the fire, a bright, crimson glare of flame proceeded, in the midst of which appeared an unearthly figure of gigantic height, but lean and attenuated as a skeleton.

The appearance of this figure was singularly fearful, for it was clothed in some tight black dress with steely gleams, that covered it from head to foot, a pair of short, upright horns projecting from the close skull-cap, and only leaving exposed a face of deathly pallor, with great, burning black eyes, and a mustache that pointed upward in true diabolical fashion.

There was but a moment to examine this figure, as it stood in the cavity, outlined against the red glow. In one hand it brandished a single javelin, in the other a bundle of similar darts. A second later the red glow disappeared, and the figure with it, leaving the usually stolid Indians and their companion struck aghast with astonishment and awe.

Then, ere a word could be spoken, the same demoniac laugh rung out, and the gigantic apparition, with a bound, was in the midst of their little fire, which it scattered in all directions with a single kick.

Through the thick darkness that ensued, the white man heard the noise of a confused struggle, that seemed to endure for about half a minute. Firm and determined as was the spy, he recoiled in ungovernable terror to the side of his horse, and snatched from the holsters his pistols, one of which he fired in the direction of the sounds of battle.

By the flash of the pistol he distinguished the terrible figure, in an attitude of mad glee, brandishing its darts over the prostrate bodies of three Indians, the fourth striving to rise, and transfixed with a dart, while the fifth was fleeing for his life toward the spy. Instinctively the white man climbed on his horse in the darkness, as a wild peal of laughter greeted his shot.

He had seen the demon leaping toward him!

"HA! HA! HA!!! BLACK NICK HAS THEM FAST!" yelled the harsh voice, and again, as if by magic, a red glow flashed over the place.

In the midst of this glare, the spy beheld the black demon clutch the fleeing Indian with his long arms, and go leaping back toward the hollow tree, with the writhing form of the savage close clasped. Then there was a blinding white glare, a cloud of smoke, and a loud report, in the midst of which the demon leaped into the hollow, and vanished from sight, sinking visibly into a pit of darkness.

With a muttered groan of terror, the now completely unnerved spy wheeled round his frightened horse and fled, as fast as the animal could carry him, while the forest resumed the gloom and silence of night.

CHAPTER II.

THE AIDE-DE-CAMP'S DISCOVERY.

THERE are few sights in the world as beautiful as an American mountain-side, clothed with forest to the summit, when early frosts have

begun to touch the leaves, and wake them into color.

In the midst of the wild mountains of Vermont, in those days almost deserted by human beings, a young man on horseback was pursuing his way at a smart trot along a narrow road that wound round the lower ridges, in a way that showed the ingenuity of the rustic engineers in economizing labor.

To all appearance there was not a creature in sight, save the wild animals and the lonely traveler, who pursued the path as if he knew it well. Once, when he stopped to water his horse at a stream, he startled a herd of deer who were coming to drink, and caused them to scurry away through the bushes in alarm.

The young traveler looked around him as the deer vanished in the thicket, with great admiration. He was in the midst of a small valley, hemmed in by rounded mountains, and through the midst of which ran a brown, brawling stream, in which the spotted trout played by hundreds. The mountains were clothed to the very summit with woods, and although it was not yet the end of August, light frosts had already been there, in the long nights on the mountain-sides. Here and there amid the green blazed out the scarlet of a distant tree, half of whose foliage had been touched as with a fiery pencil, while the verdure of the rest looked fresher by contrast. Now and then the golden hue of a maple shed a glory of color over its vicinity, but there was, as yet, only enough of this to set off the somber-green of the pines and the lighter foliage of the oak and birch.

The traveler was a young man and handsome withal. His dress was perhaps the most picturesque in the annals of military history, for the youth was evidently a soldier, and an officer at that. The towering fur cap, narrowing as it rose, and ornamented with gold cord and white plumes, the furred and braided jacket, hanging from his shoulder, the still more gorgeous dolman that fitted his slight form to a nicety blazing with gold embroidery, all over the sky-blue ground of the breast, the light buckskin breeches, with braided pocket-covers, and the scarlet morocco boots, rising mid-leg and tasseled with gold, were unfailing indications to the eye practiced in military costume that the wearer was an officer of some German corps of hussars, then at the zenith of their reputation under the great Frederick of Prussia. The young hussar was magnificently mounted on a dapple-gray horse of wonderful bone and sinew, though quite low in flesh from campaigning, and his housings were as splendid as his dress and arms. The latter, saber, pistols, and light carbine, were all silver inlaid, and of exquisite finish.

To a hidden observer, the sight of this gay cavalier, alone in the wilds of Vermont, would have suggested great wonder. How came he there, and what was he doing? In those early days of the Revolutionary struggle, rags and bare feet were the rule, brilliant uniforms the exceptions. There was no corps of hussars in the Continental service, and the Hessians, on the English side, wore green, not pale blue. Besides, the uniform of the hussar officer was distinctively Prussian, the black eagle being worked on his horse's housings.

Whatever he was, he seemed to be quite at home in the woods, for his blue eye was calm and fearless, and the long, fair mustache that drooped over his chin covered as resolute a mouth as ever closed firmly over shut teeth.

Having allowed his beast to drink, the young cavalier urged him through the water to the other side, and trotted briskly up the lonely road between the arches of the wood, till he had stopped opposite the ridge, and beheld before him another valley and more hills.

The ridge on which he stood happened to command an extensive view; reining up, he scanned it with a practiced eye.

"By heavens!" he exclaimed to himself, in a low tone, after a long and searching look; "there is some one living on the haunted hill, where even the Indians would not dare to go. I must investigate that."

So saying, he shook his rein, and galloped down the hillside, in the direction of a mountain, the largest of any in sight, from the side of which a thin column of smoke curled up in the air.

Nothing very strange in that it may be said; but the young officer knew better.

He was passing through a country in which there was no settlement in the path he was riding, till he came to Derryfield. The mountain before him was well known by the name of "Haunted Hill" to the whites, and had the reputation of being haunted by a demon, who

frightened away all the Indians who ventured near it. This was well known to the young cavalier, who, being free from superstition, had chosen that way to escape any danger from the outlying Indians of Burgoyne's army, then lying between Ticonderoga and Albany, slowly advancing. The young officer himself was on the staff of General Schuyler, who was then retreating before his formidable foe, and who had sent the aide-de-camp on a secret mission on which he was now proceeding.

The sight of smoke on the side of the Haunted Hill excited the curiosity of the young officer. Smoke meant settled habitation. No Indian could be there, he felt certain, on account of their superstitious fears of the mountain demon. If any one else were there, might he not prove to be in some way connected with the mystery of the demon? Full of curiosity, and for the moment forgetting his mission, the young aide-de-camp crossed the valley, and commenced to toil up the sides of Haunted Hill.

He was not aware, keen as was his glance, that one still keener was watching him. Hardly had he gained the foot of the mountain, than an Indian warrior looked out of the cover he had quitted, and giving a rapid signal to some one behind, plunged down the hillside, skirting the road and keeping the cover, followed at a loping trot by at least a dozen more, in full war-paint.

The course of the savages was after the cavalier, and so rapidly did they run, that they reached the foot of the hill before he had got half-way up the side of Haunted Hill.

It is true that the hussar had slackened his pace, and was now toiling up the steep ascent, holding by the mane of his steed. The Indians, on the other hand, pressed along at the same rapid, tireless lope, and quickly came in sight of the aide-de-camp, whose steps they seemed to be dogging with true savage pertinacity.

Once having him safe in sight, the warriors slackened their pace, and contented themselves with following, step by step, gliding from tree to tree, and keeping themselves carefully hidden.

Meanwhile, the young officer pursued his way up the hill in the direction that promised to bring him close to the mysterious smoke which had excited his curiosity.

In half an hour's climbing he had reached the summit of the lower ridge of Haunted Hill, and beheld before him a little basin, scooped by the hand of Nature in the side of the hill, about a hundred yards across, bare of wood, in the center of which stood a low stone hut, thatched with fir branches, from the summit of which curled the blue smoke that he had first noticed.

The little basin was bounded on one side by a precipice of rock about fifty feet in height, crowned with trees, and surmounted by the steep ascent of the upper mountain. At the right it ended abruptly in a second precipice, which fell away into the valley, while the tops of lofty trees below just showed themselves over the edge. The forest bounded the other side, and a little spring trickled over the edge of the lower precipice with a tinkling sound.

But what riveted the attention of the youth, was a group that he discovered in the midst of the little valley standing in front of the cabin door.

Several tame deer were crowding eagerly around a young girl, in a quaint, picturesque dress, in strange proximity to a huge black bear and three tall bloodhounds of the largest breed.

The officer reined in his horse in amazement as he looked, and ejaculated aloud:

"Heavens! It is Diana herself."

CHAPTER III.

THE ROCK NYMPH.

THE sight of the horseman in that lonely place excited a strange commotion. Hardly had the young officer uttered his involuntary exclamation, when the three hounds set up a loud baying, and came leaping toward him, the black bear waddled after them, while the timid fawns bounded away into the forest in great alarm.

The girl herself, who seemed to be the mistress of this menagerie, turned toward the stranger with the port of the goddess to whom he had compared her. In truth, she resembled nothing so much as a living statue of Diana, for she wore the same short tunic and buskins, and carried the bow and quiver of the patroness of hunting. Her figure and face, with the simple antique knot in which her hair was arranged, confirmed the likeness; and when she hastily fitted an arrow to the bow she carried, it seemed to the young soldier as if he had indeed insulted the privacy of some supernatural being.

Most men in his position would have either turned to flee or made some motion of defense. Not so the hussar.

He remained sitting on his horse, in spite of the menacing appearance of the bloodhounds, without moving a muscle; and the dogs, as soon as they closed in, justified his course, by ceasing to bay, while they ran inquisitively round, snuffing at the horse's legs, now and then uttering a low growl, but offering no actual violence. The black bear likewise became peaceable, halting at a little distance and sitting up on its haunches, surveying the intruder with a comical air of wisdom.

The girl who had been disturbed, observing the passive attitude of the hussar, hesitated a moment, and finally advanced toward him, with the same haughty and insulted aspect however.

As she came closer, and her eyes ran over the face and equipments of the intruder, the severity of her glance insensibly relaxed. It was not in female nature to look cross at such a dashing young cavalier. He on his part, surveyed her with increasing admiration, as he beheld her purely Grecian face with its frame of golden hair, lighted by great solemn blue eyes.

The girl was the first to speak, in a tone of displeasure.

"Do you know where you are, sir?" she asked. "What made you venture where all men shun to go?"

"Fairer Diana," began the hussar, half-wondering if he were not dreaming.

The girl interrupted him with an expression of surprise.

"How? You know my name?"

"How could I mistake it?" said the hussar, with great adroitness. "The beauty of Diana is famous the world over, and I am the humblest of her worshippers."

The girl looked at him in amazement. She could not see that the accomplished man of the world was but taking advantage of a lucky accident, to feel his way into her confidence, by a mingling of truth and falsehood in his manner.

"Then who are you that knows me so well?" she asked, artlessly. "I never thought human creature would come nigh our cottage, and you say it is famous."

"For my name," said the hussar, smiling, "you may call me Captain Schuyler, if you will. If you would like a shorter name and a pleasanter one, call me Adrian."

"Adrian is a pretty name," said the girl, smiling with the frank, fearless innocence that distinguished her every action. "Adrian and Diana are both beautiful."

"Diana is beautiful," said the hussar, meaningly; "how beautiful no one knows but me."

Diana looked up to him inquiringly. Then something seemed to inform her of his meaning, for she flushed hotly and drew herself up with sudden haughtiness, asking:

"What brought you here? Do you not know that it is death to intrude on this mountain? Even the wild Indian shuns it."

"I have heard that a demon haunts it," said the hussar, boldly; "but I never dreamed that it wore such a shape as yours."

At the bold words of the intruder Diana turned pale, and looked apprehensively around her, saying in low tones:

"Do not mention him, foolish Adrian. He will seize you and plunge you into a fiery pit if he hears you. Away, while you have time, or you may repent it. Any moment he may be here."

"In that case I should like to see him," said Schuyler, coolly. "I don't believe in demons, Diana. Your demon is a man, and I am curious to see him. I rode over here expressly to do that."

"You rode over here to dare the Mountain Demon?" asked the girl, in a faint tone, as if wonder-stricken. "Man, are you mad? I tell you he has killed every creature that has passed this way for years, and he will kill you, if he finds you."

The captain of hussars laughed carelessly, and threw up the flag of one of his holsters, from whence he produced a long pistol of elegant finish, and double-barreled.

"That, for his demoniac majesty," he said, holding up the weapon, "and let him beware how he crosses my path. I have—"

He was interrupted by a suspicious growl from one of the hounds, who had been couched on the grass in seeming contentment since the conference had become peaceful.

The animal rose to his feet and stalked to the edge of the glade, followed by his three companions, snuffing and growling.

A moment later an arrow came from the

cover of the mountain-side, grazed the neck of the foremost hound, and whizzed past the hussar, sticking harmlessly in a tree.

The three hounds set up a simultaneous savage bay and dashed headlong into the cover, from whence, a moment later, rose the appalling war-whoop of the Mohawk, as a dozen warriors sprung out, and rushed toward Schuyler and Diana.

In a moment a fierce contest had commenced, the gallant hounds each pinning an Indian by the throat, while the bear rushed into the fight with a savage growl. Adrian Schuyler shot down a savage with his pistol, and wounded a second, then drew his saber, and instinctively looked around for the mysterious girl, Diana.

She had vanished, as if the earth had swallowed her up!

He was too much confused by the sudden attack to think of where she had gone. Already two of the hounds were ripped up by Indian scalping-knives, and the third was transfixed with an arrow.

As he turned toward the Indians, his horse plunging and rearing, the flashes of several rifles were followed by a sharp tingling sensation in his side, and two warriors seized his bridle, while a third rushed at him, tomahawk in hand.

But the hussar was not the man to yield to a surprise. His keen saber played round his head like a flash of light, and in a trice he had cut down one assailant, while the other let go the bridle to escape a second blow.

With a shout of triumph he dashed in his spurs, and the gray charger took him clear of his enemies with a bound. Then, lying down on his saddle to escape the bullets, away went Captain Adrian Schuyler, late of the Zieten Hussars of Prussia, at full speed, through the clearing, passing the stone hut, which seemed to be quite deserted, and darting into the forest beyond.

Arrows and bullets whistled past him as he went, but he was untouched, save by the first graze which he had lately felt. He heard the Indians whooping behind him, and doubted not that they were pursuing, but he felt secure on his swift steed, and his only anxiety seemed to be as to the safety of the strange girl who called herself Diana.

Where she had gone, and whether the Indians had seen her, was an enigma to him as he fled away, but he had no time to lose. The young aide-de-camp was even then on an important mission, and his detour to the Haunted Mountain had cost him valuable time.

Fully resolved to return with sufficient force to investigate the mystery at some future time, the officer galloped on through the woods till he regained once more the road to Derryfield, and pursued his journey at a gallop.

CHAPTER IV.

THE YOUNG CAPTAIN'S CAPTURE.

THE sun was within about an hour of setting behind the western ridges of the Green Mountains as a tall, heavily-built man, with strong, sullen face, sat at the door of a log-cabin, within a few miles of the settlement of Derryfield, looking across a lonely valley.

The attire of this individual was that of a farmer, and a little patch, of about half an acre, behind his cabin, showed by its ripening corn that his occupation was not wholly a fiction. Still, a certain air of neglect about cabin and owner, and the presence of a long rifle that lay across his knees, announced that his farming was at least eked out by hunting, if not subordinated thereto.

Although only a few miles from a settlement, the scene around the seated man was completely wild and lonely, so much so that the people had christened the owner the "Mountain Hermit." His solitary habits and sullen manner repelled strangers from forming his acquaintance, and even his name was unknown to any one in the country-side.

He had first made his appearance there about three years before, had built his own cabin in that solitary place, and resided there ever since. The only occasions he was ever seen away were when some hunter caught sight of him in the woods on the same errand as himself, and it remained a mystery where he procured powder and lead, for he never entered Derryfield to buy any.

Since the advance of Burgoyne's army, people ceased to watch him. It was well known that hordes of Indians were prowling about in the vicinity of every settlement, and no one dared to venture away alone. Still the Mountain Hermit remained in his cabin, as if insensible to danger, although "Indian signs"

had been seen more than once near his little clearing.

On the evening in question he sat gazing at the sunset and soliloquizing, according to the habit of most lonely men.

"Let them come," he muttered. "They cannot do as much harm to the Puritanical bounds as I wish them. Let them scalp the women if they please. There will be so many rebel brats the less, to grow up into boors. Let them abuse me. I can stand the name of renegade if I get my revenge. Let us see their Washington, that they boast so much of, help them out of this scrape."

As he spoke his frown grew dark and gloomy and he rose to his feet. His manner was fretful and impatient.

"Why don't the fools come?" he muttered. "When there is no danger, who so bold as an Indian? Let them once get a good scare, and you cannot drive them into battle. It is beyond the chief's time—no—there he comes. After all, the brutes keep faith."

At the moment he uttered the last words the stately form of an Indian chief stepped into the clearing, as if he had issued from the ground, and calmly advanced toward the recluse.

The new-comer was a Mohawk on the war-path, from his paint and other peculiarities. He carried a short rifle over his arm, and saluted the hermit with grave courtesy.

The white man opened the conversation with an air of authority to which the Indian submitted quietly.

"Bearskin is ready. Where are his warriors?"

The chief waved his hand toward the exit of the valley.

"My brothers are in camp by the white road that leads to the town! They await the Night Hawk's orders."

"Good. It is new moon. When the moon sinks I will be there. Let them stop every one that passes by the road; but no firing. Let the arrow do its work silently. Is the town well watched all round?"

"Not a creature will escape. My warriors are like the web of the spider; the white men are like the flies. We shall suck their blood before morning, and the squaws will be tired of counting the scalps."

"It is good," said the Mountain Hermit, with a grim smile. "Let Bearskin watch well. Has any one come along the road to-day?"

The Indian answered not for a moment. His quick ear had caught a sound to which the other was insensible, and he stood with his head bent on one side listening intently.

"One comes now," said the white man, quickly. "Do not kill him on the road, or the sight may deter others. Drag him into the forest and keep him till I come."

The Indian nodded silently and plunged into the forest in a direction that promised to take him toward the road that crossed the foot of the valley almost within sight of the clearing.

The recluse remained a moment listening, and presently caught the sounds which the quicker senses of the chief had first announced. A horseman was evidently galloping along the road toward him, and the clatter of spur and scabbard told the nature of the traveler without words.

The recluse cast his rifle into the hollow of his arm and struck across the valley to a point where he could intersect the road in its many curves at a much nearer point. He was a little curious to see who the advancing dragoon might be.

There was still plenty of light, although the sun was fast nearing the mountain-tops, and the long strides of the Mountain Hermit took him across the stretch of woods that barred him from the road in a very short time.

As he neared it the sound of horse-hoofs and the clatter of a saber-scabbard were plainly audible, skirting the mountain-side beyond.

At the point which the recluse had reached, the road came round a spur, over the dividing ridge, and dived into the valley beyond. Waiting a few moments, till the sound of hoofs was close by, the Mountain Hermit stalked boldly into the road, just as the young hussar captain dashed around the corner.

At the sight of the stranger's figure Adrian Schuyler abruptly halted, throwing his horse on its haunches close to the other, while the sharp click of his pistol-lock enforced the stern command, "Halt!"

The stranger quietly turned and faced the hussar with a sullen frown, asking:

"Who are you to halt a peaceable farmer? I've as much right as you, and more, in this place."

"Perhaps so," said the hussar, coolly; "but in war time we of the light cavalry take liberties that we support with our weapons. Who are you?"

"A peaceable farmer, as I said before," answered the other, with a sullen scowl. "Who are you?"

"An officer on duty, my man, who doesn't care to be trifled with. There are too many Indians and spies loose in these mountains for me to trust strangers. If you're a peaceable farmer, you're as sulky a looking one as I have seen. How far is it to Derryfield?"

"Four miles," said the sullen stranger, gruffly. Then he turned away as if the colloquy was terminated, but the hussar was not going to let him off so easy.

"Halt!" he again cried, in his sharp tones, covering the other with his pistol. "Move another step and it's your last."

The stranger obeyed the order with his usual sullen air, but the hussar's voice showed that he was in earnest.

"Look here, Mr. Officer," began the stranger, in a tone of injury, "I don't see what you have against me to treat me in this way. Let me alone, or by the Lord, we'll see if my rifle ain't as good as your pistol."

The hussar was close to him as he spoke, and he was already beginning to handle his long rifle, when Adrian's horse, obedient to his master's will, made a sudden leap, which brought the soldier's left hand to the shoulder of the recluse.

In a moment the muzzle of the pistol was at the sullen stranger's ear, as Adrian sternly ordered him:

"Fire in the air, quick, or I fire here. Not a word. Fire!"

The sullen man cast one savage look at the hussar's face, but the menace he met there was so unyielding that he obeyed the order.

The harmless rifle-bullet whistled skyward, and the sharp report waked the echoes for miles around as the now disarmed man stood glaring defiantly at the hussar.

"Now drop your gun," said Adrian, sternly. The stranger obeyed, still with the same scowl.

"It's my impression," pursued the officer, grimly, "that you're a spy of some sort or you'd have treated a patriot officer with more courtesy. Unbuckle your belt, and drop it. I see you have a knife still. No fooling, sir. I shall be fully justified in shooting you, if you hesitate."

The stranger, without a word, did as he was told, still looking up at the hussar with the same defiant scowl as ever. The soldier, still keeping his strange captive under his eye, dived into the gay saber-tasche that dangled beside his sword, and produced therefrom a pair of delicate steel handcuffs.

"Hold up your hands," he said quietly, "I'm going to take you into Derryfield, dead or alive."

Still the stranger spoke not a word. His face wore the same expression of bitter rage, without a trace of fear, though he stood there disarmed and helpless. He held up his hands, and allowed Schuyler to handcuff him without a struggle. Then, as the officer passed a cord between his manacled wrists and fastened it to his saddle-bow, he uttered a short laugh of bitter mockery.

The captain did not deign to notice it. "Go on," he said, spurring up his horse, "and run your best, or you'll find yourself dragged."

He set off at a slow trot, the prisoner running alongside with surprising power, and took the road to Derryfield.

CHAPTER V.

TURNING THE TABLES.

CAPTAIN ADRIAN SCHUYLER pursued his way toward Derryfield, pistol in hand, keeping a vigilant watch over his prisoner. The altercation on the road had detained him so long that the sun had kissed the mountain-tops ere he had crossed the valley, and a dark shadow had crept over the landscape.

The hussar felt uneasy, he hardly knew why, but the defiant manner of his prisoner had roused strange misgivings in his breast. Still nothing occurred to disturb him on his passage through the valley; and as he crossed the ridge on the other side, he came in sight of the village of Derryfield, nestling in the wide valley, through which ran a large tributary of the Connecticut, while the glimmer of lights stole through the gathering darkness.

"Thank Heaven, in sight at last!" ejaculated

the officer, as he involuntarily pulled up to gaze at the scene. The outlines of houses could be distinguished in the twilight, but as some three miles still intervened, everything was misty and uncertain. The hussar chirruped to his horse, and was about to ride on, when the hitherto silent prisoner suddenly woke into terrible life and activity.

Seizing the soldier by the belt with his manacled hands with the strength of a giant, he endeavored to drag him down from the saddle, uttering a shout as he did so.

The hussar, though slight of frame, seemed to possess considerable nerve and activity, for he resisted the effort with great adroitness by throwing himself to the further side of the saddle, while he instinctively leveled his pistol and fired.

The grim recluse uttered a savage cry of pain as the bullet plowed his shoulder, and grappled the slender soldier with such power that he lost a stirrup, let go his bridle and tried to push away his assailant with his left hand, while he cocked the other barrel of his pistol with his right.

How the struggle might have terminated is uncertain, but just as the soldier was almost out of the saddle and bringing his pistol to bear, a score of dark forms sprung from the roadside, and Adrian Schuyler was seized by strong hands, the pistol going off in the struggle.

A moment later he was a prisoner, while the charger, freed from his burden and snorting with terror, gave a series of flying kicks at the crowd of Indians, broke loose from all restraint, snapping the cord which bound him to the unknown spy, and galloped away toward Derryfield neighing as he went.

"Hell's furies, give him an arrow!" cried the spy savagely. "Stop the brute, or he'll alarm the town! Fools! have ye no bows?"

The answer was given in a shower of arrows after the flying steed, which only seemed to increase its speed, for it soon vanished in the gathering darkness, leaving its master a captive.

The reflections of Adrian Schuyler were by no means pleasant at finding himself in the power of his quondam prisoner. Too late he recognized the trap into which he had fallen, and that he had made a bitter and remorseless enemy.

The spy, for such he evidently was, seemed to be the leader of the Indians; he issued his orders as peremptorily as a chief, and was implicitly obeyed.

He did not deign to take any notice of the hussar himself, but in a few moments the latter found himself stripped of all his weapons, while the handcuffs were transferred from the wrists of the recluse to his own, and he was hurried off into the darkening woods.

The white leader remained on the spot where the fracas had occurred, gazing angrily toward Derryfield, scowling and muttering to himself.

"Curse the popinjay hussar! why did I let him stop me, when a bullet would have kept his brute from giving the alarm? It is too late now. Another goodly scheme thwarted by one of those cursed accidents that none can foresee! We must retire. One comfort, I have him, and I'll take satisfaction out of his pretty face, when I see the flames distorting it. Ay, ay, there you go, in the toll-gate. I thought the brute would rouse ye."

As he spoke, several roving lights appeared in the distance, on the way to Derryfield, and the sound of distant shouts, mingled with the hoof-beats of the flying charger. The new moon shed a faint light over the landscape, and the spy turned away into the woods on the track of the Indians, who had already vanished.

Adrian Schuyler, manacled and guarded, stumbled on through the darkness, not knowing whither he was going. He judged that his escort was numerous, from the constant rustle of leaves, and the sound of low signals that echoed through the woods.

He did not know that those signals were the recall of a numerous band of Indians, who, but for his accidental presence and the escape of his horse would, ere this, have been closing around Derryfield, for a midnight massacre, as well planned as it was atrocious.

Like the tiger, the Indian attacks only by surprise, and, that foiled, is apt to slink away. Adrian Schuyler knew that a body of troops was already gathered at Derryfield, militia, perhaps, but none the less the victors of Lexington and Breed's Hill. In a midnight surprise these men would have fallen an easy prey to the waiting Indians, but their leader knew too well that the flying horse with its bloody saddle would tell a tale to the commander at Derryfield.

ryfield that the latter was not likely to pass unheeded.

For several hours the weary march through the woods was continued, the Indians in sullen silence urging on their weary captive, till the latter was ready to drop. He had been riding rapidly for at least ten hours, and was tired when he dismounted, and his high-heeled boots were not the style of foot-gear to wind a way among rocks and roots.

At last, when the moon had been down for several hours, and the poor hussar was nearly exhausted, the whistle of a whippowil, echoing through the arches of the woods, brought the party guarding Schuyler to a halt, and the sound of horse-hoofs announced that some one approached.

Presently up rode the quondam farmer and Mountain Hermit, now revealed in his true character as a partisan leader, and followed by several men in green uniforms, wearing the brass and bearskin helmets of a well-known Tory corps, called after their leader the "Johnson Greens" or "Rangers."

The spy was dressed as before in homespun clothes, but he rode a stout horse, and wore a sword, while he seemed to be in authority over white and red alike.

He issued a few brief orders, after which he dismounted from his horse, and the rangers and the Indians proceeded to encamp.

It was not long before a fierce fire was glowing under the arches of the woods, the heat being very grateful to the frame of the captive hussar, for the night was chilly, and he was wet and shivering, from wading so many brooks.

He had sunk down at the foot of a tree, quite tired out, when a ranger stirred him up with the butt-end of his rifle, and ordered him in a surly tone, to "get up, the captain wanted to see him."

Schuyler obeyed the ungracious order with patience, for he knew the hands he had fallen into, and did not wish to provoke further indignities. He followed the soldier to where his late enemy lay under a tree, with his feet to the fire, gloomily meditating.

The partisan looked up, and a grim smile lighted his face.

"So, my young hussar, the tables are turned, it seems. It takes an old warrior to keep Tony Butler in irons. Now, hand out your dispatches, unless you prefer to be searched. Which shall it be?"

The young officer smiled disdainfully. "My dispatches are in my brain," he said. "All I carry in writing is this."

And he drew a paper from his bosom and handed it to the captain of rangers.

CHAPTER VI.

A DEMONICAL VISIT.

CAPTAIN BUTLER, for such was the name by which the partisan seemed to be known, took the parchment extended by the prisoner, and examined it closely.

"Why, this is only a commission," he growled. "What do I care for that? I want your dispatches, Captain Schuyler, since that seems to be your name."

"I have none, on my word as an officer," said Schuyler calmly.

"Then what were you doing on the road to Derryfield?" asked Butler, bending his shaggy brows on the other.

"On duty," was the laconic reply.

"What kind of duty?"

"That is my own affair and my general's."

"Who is your general?"

"General Philip Schuyler."

"So," said the ranger leader, musingly. "Are you a relation of his?"

"His second cousin."

"On his staff?"

"As an aide—yes."

"What uniform is that you wear? I know none such among the rebel ragamuffins."

"It is the uniform of the Zieten regiment of hussars, in the Prussian service."

Butler looked at the other with more respect. At that time, the name of Frederic of Prussia was as famous as that of Napoleon, twenty-five years later, and the Tories, while despising the "rebels," held a great reverence for the few foreign officers who had found their way into the American service.

"Have you, indeed, served in the Zieten Hussars?" he asked.

"Seven years," said young Schuyler, proudly.

"You must have been a boy when you entered."

"I was—a cadet."

"And what brought you back here to link your fortunes with these rebels, sir?"

"My country. She was in danger, and I owed her my life."

"What orders did you carry to Derryfield?"

The hussar smiled slightly, and remained silent.

Butler looked at him with a gloomy but hesitating manner. He did not seem so much incensed against the hussar since he had discovered the famous corps to which he belonged.

"Look here, captain," he said, suddenly, altering his manner to one of complete cordiality, "there can be no use in hiding the truth from me. I have no ill-feeling against you for treating me so roughly. It was war-time, and a hussar should always be on the alert. But why should an officer of your experience take a side which must be the losing one in this struggle, when a commission in the king's service awaits you, if you wish? Already General Burgoyne has your cousin enveloped in the toils, at Albany, and another week will see the rebels cut in half, from the lakes to New York. I know why you went to Derryfield. It was to try and rouse the Vermont militia. But it is of no use, I assure you. Who is in command there, by the by?"

Schuyler again smiled, but made no answer.

The partisan leader frowned in a vexed manner at that.

"Captain Schuyler," he said, in a low, grating voice, "remember there are Indians round you. For the last time, what was your errand?"

"For the last time, Captain Butler, I will not tell you."

Butler changed his manner to its old repulsive sullenness.

"Very well. Your blood on your own head!"

He spoke a few words in the Mohawk tongue, and Schuyler was seized and bound hand and foot in an incredibly short space of time, then cast down at the foot of a tree, and left between two guards, to sleep if he could.

The last words of the partisan had led him to anticipate immediate torture, at least, but such did not seem to be the intention of his captors. He was left to himself, in a position far from uncomfortable as regarded warmth, with a tree overhead and a fire near him, while his bonds, though secure, were by no means painful.

Meanwhile, the few simple preparations of the Indians for camping out had been completed, and the whole band lay stretched around the fire, with their feet in close proximity.

The leader had wrapped himself in a cloak and lain down a little apart, and everything was quiet, as Adrian Schuyler softly raised his head to look for his chances of escape. He counted his enemies, and found that there were only thirteen Indians and six soldiers present, including Butler. Where the other bands had gone he could not tell, but none were there.

Young Schuyler had not served under the best light-cavalry generals of Europe without acquiring much fertility of resource and boldness of character. To be left alone was, with him, to plan some means of escape; and as he lay there, he considered that in the morning his chances would probably be desperate.

He lay quite still for some time, till he heard the deep breathing of sleepers on all sides. Then he rolled over to one side, nearer one of his guards, the knife at whose belt excited his hopes.

The instant he moved, a deep voice accosted him from behind a neighboring tree, saying in English:

"Roll back!"

The hussar obeyed, and his heart sunk as he did so. He was evidently watched by a hidden sentry.

A moment later the man moved out from the tree against which he had been leaning, a stalwart ranger of the "Johnson Greens."

Without another word, he grounded his rifle-butt, and stood leaning on the muzzle, looking at Schuyler with grave attention.

From that moment, the young officer saw it was useless to move till that gaze was off him.

Resigning himself to his fate, he pretended to go to sleep, and insensibly the warmth and silence lulled him into a doze, from which he woke with a sudden start, after a lapse of time that he could not compute exactly.

When he looked round, the fire was burning low, and all was in gloom. The sentry had left his post, but Schuyler could distinguish the dark outline of his form leaning against a tree.

Silently as he could, the hussar rolled over

once more toward his nearest guard, and this time there was no warning from the sentry. With his head bowed on his hands, which were clasped on the muzzle of his rifle, the latter was sleeping and snoring audibly.

The prisoner raised his manacled hands to withdraw the knife from the sleeping Indian's belt, and was already in the act of touching him, when a sudden interruption occurred to the quiet—an interruption of the most awful character.

A bright glare of red light shot over the scene from above, and the astonished hussar beheld, in the midst of the branches of the tree over his head, a blazing ball of crimson fire.

On a lower branch, stood a gigantic black figure, which Schuyler recognized, with an indescribable sensation of awe and superstition which he could not conquer, as the very embodiment of the traditional idea of the Genius of Evil himself.

The gaunt, gigantic figure, with short, upright horns on its head, black from head to foot, with steely gleams; the deathly white face, with great, burning eyes and pointed mustache, curved upward in a malicious grin of triumph—all were the usual and traditional aspects of the fiend in art.

For one moment the horrible demon stood erect on a branch, holding another above his head, while he brandished a bundle of darts in his left hand.

Not a soul in camp was awake but Schuyler, who fancied himself for a moment the victim of nightmare, so inexplicable was the vision to his senses.

Then there echoed a triumphant laugh from the tree, and a deep, hoarse voice roared out:

"HA! HA! HA! HA! I GATHER THEM IN! I GATHER THEM IN!"

Even at the second word, every man in camp started up, and stood gazing spellbound at the fearful figure.

Then, with a final yell of fiendish laughter, the demon leaped down on the head of an Indian, and cast a shower of his darts in all directions. Every one went with fearful force and unerring aim straight to the heart of a victim, and four men fell writhing to the earth in as many seconds.

Then, with a low wail of inexpressible terror, white and red, without venturing a blow or shot for defense, flew in wild dismay in all directions.

As for Schuyler, he was too much astounded to move. His bonds also prevented him, had he been so inclined. He lay mutely gazing up at the extraordinary apparition as it stood over the fire dealing death around it, expecting his own death to follow.

Suddenly, almost in the instant that his captors fled, there was a loud explosion in the top of the tree, and the red glare vanished to be replaced by a profound darkness, in the midst of which the wild laugh of the specter sounded fearfully distinct, while the rapid rush of feet through the leaves told of the flight of every one else.

Adrian Schuyler lay perfectly still. He was not naturally superstitious, but the strange events he had witnessed were enough to rouse the fears of the bravest. He remained where he had fallen, listening to the receding feet, after which all was silent.

How long he lay there he could not tell. The stillness of death hung over the forest for hours, but he feared to move, lest he should attract the notice of the strange creature. Where it had gone to, he did not know, but he fancied it must be near, from having heard nothing of its departure.

Thus the hussar lay on his back by the glimmering embers, till the doubtful light of dawn stole over the scene, and revealed the empty forest to his view, with a heap of corpses lying by an extinguished fire.

The demon had vanished.

CHAPTER VII.

A STRANGE SERVICE.

ADRIAN SCHUYLER sat up, with some difficulty, owing to his bonds, and looked around him. There lay the dead bodies, five in number, and every one was that of an Indian. Strange to say, not a white man had fallen. Each body was lying flat on its back, with a ghastly gash right over the heart, that stretched across the whole length of the rib, leaving a gaping red pit in the side.

The javelins with which death had been inflicted had vanished, and the footprints of some creature with a cloven foot were plainly visible by the side of the corpses.

The light of day, instead of dispelling the

mystery, only served to render it deeper. The hussar could not tell where he was, for the thick woods, but he noticed that the ground rose to the right of the camp, with a steepness that told he was at the foot of a mountain.

Now, unwatched by human eye, he rolled himself near the body of an Indian, and using the latter's knife with his own fettered hands, soon cut the cords that bound his feet together. His own handcuffs remained, but they were not an incumbrance to his further escape. Moreover, it was not hard to find weapons. They lay by the bodies, or scattered in terror over the ground, and a heap of abandoned horse equipments, at the foot of a tree, showed where the demoralized rangers had fled on barebacked horses. Lying among these equipments he found his own weapons as they had been thrown there, and it was with great joy that he resumed them, one by one.

Putting on a sword-belt when a person is handcuffed is by no means an easy operation, but Adrian managed it somehow, and then took his departure for the mountain, presenting the strange spectacle of a fully armed hussar roaming the woods, handcuffed like a prisoner.

The irons were decidedly inconvenient, but he had no means to unlock them. The key in his saber scabbard had been taken by his captors of the evening to extricate their chief, and the latter had fled, carrying it with him.

In a short time the young officer had reached the ascent which he judged to be the side of a mountain, and beheld his expectations verified. A lofty mountain indeed was before him, and a break in the woods, higher up, promised him a prospect of the surroundings.

After some minutes of hard climbing he reached a flat rock that jutted out many feet from the mountain-side, and around which the trees had gradually thinned away, leaving a view of the usual sea of mountains and valleys.

Something in the scene seemed familiar to the hussar, who yet could not exactly ascertain where he was. Casting his eyes to the right over a sea of foliage, he caught sight of a thin wreath of blue smoke curling in the air, and at the same time, beheld a peculiar shaped cliff, with a stream falling over its side, which he instantly recognized, ejaculating:

"By heavens, it is the Haunted Hill!"

It was indeed, but the other side from that which he had been the day before.

"The mystery is solved," mused the hussar. "No wonder the Indians fled. It must have been the Mountain Demon that saved me last night. But, surely, it cannot be possible that demon's really in it. There was none here yesterday, and the savages must have grown bold from its absence. Who can it be, then?"

As he thus mused, the clear, silvery notes of a horn echoed from the rocks overhead on the mountain-side, and soon after came the flying feet of some creature rapidly approaching.

Instinctively, Adrian Schuyler drew one of his pistols and cocked it, ready to defend himself against any attack.

The next moment one of the large bloodhounds he had seen the day before dashed over the rock at some distance, without noticing him, and then came the graceful figure of the girl Diana, who bounded past him within ten feet, and suddenly stopped, dumb with amazement, staring at the handsome stranger.

Adrian was the first to break the silence.

"Fairer Diana," he said, in his most winning tones, "well met once more on the mountain."

"How came you here, rash man?" asked the girl, hastily, and turning pale as she spoke. "Do you not know that this is fatal ground? Are you tired of your life? If he finds you here he will kill you."

Schuyler smiled.

"As to why I came here, it is easily answered. I was brought here a prisoner by a party of Indians and Tories, who camped with me in the woods at the foot of the hill. Last night a strange apparition entered our camp, killed or frightened away all the Indians, and released me. I am trying now to find my way back to Derryfield."

Diana listened to his words with apparent wonder.

"A strange apparition! What! is he here again?"

"I know not to whom you refer, lady, but a creature in the likeness of a man, but with cloven feet and horns, created such a panic among my captors as I never saw paralleled."

"And still you dare stay here," said the girl, in a tone of wonder. "Oh, sir, if you value your life, let me entreat you to fly. The road to Derryfield is straight and easy."

"And yet you stay here," said the hussar, meaningly. "Why should I fear what you do not?"

"Oh, sir, that is different. I am—I cannot tell you what. But I entreat you to fly."

"Madam," said Schuyler, gravely, "I should be glad to do so, for my duty calls me away. But I have no horse, and the woods are full of enemies. If I go on foot the chances are that I never get there."

"What then? You cannot stay here—you say you saw him—what is to be done? You must go back whence you came."

"I cannot do it," said Schuyler. "The scouts of Burgoyne's army are between me and home. I must get to Derryfield, if I have to steal a horse."

Diana wrung her hands in agony.

"Man, man, I tell you he will kill you if you stay here. You must go away."

"I have a choice of deaths, then," said the hussar, coolly. "I am safe from the Indians, on this mountain, and as for the demon, if he kills me, he will serve his enemies. On my mission to Derryfield depends the whole future of a campaign."

As he spoke, the sound of another horn, deep, hoarse and bellowing, echoed from the top of the hill, and the girl turned deadly pale, ejaculating:

"It is too late! He is here! You are lost!"

In spite of his general courage and coolness, an involuntary thrill of terror gathered over the heart of Adrian Schuyler, as he listened to the mysterious sounds of the phantom horn. It echoed from hill to hill in deep reverberations, and when it died away, left him with an indescribable sense of awe.

At the same moment, as if the mysterious demon had waited to sound his horn till the aspects of nature were in harmony with diabolical influences, a sudden shadow swept over the sun, and Adrian, looking up, beheld a deep thunder-cloud, hitherto hidden behind the mountains, swallow up the sun, and rush across the sky with wonderful swiftness, while a powerful gust of wind shook and bowed the trees on the mountain-side in a groaning chorus.

He turned to Diana, and behold, she was gone! He just caught a glimpse of her white deer-skin tunic vanishing in the upper woods on the mountain-side, whence the sound of the horn had come, and he realized that it had been a summons.

"Man or demon—girl or spirit," muttered Schuyler, as he entered the woods in pursuit. "I'll follow you, and find the mystery of this mountain, if it costs me my life. I'll know the secret, at least."

He ran through the forest in swift pursuit of the vanishing girl, but quickly realized that she was far swifter than he, for he soon lost sight of her entirely, and came to a standstill.

Not for long, however.

The storm that was already brewing became more threatening every moment, the clouds thicker and thicker, and a few drops began to patter on the leaves overhead. Remembering the direction of the mountain clearing, the hussar directed his course thereto, and pushed steadily through the woods toward it.

He had not far to go to reach it, and ten minutes brought him there, but the storm had already set in, with rattle and crash of thunder, and intense gloom, only broken by the vivid flashes of the lightning.

As he looked into the clearing, a gray sheet of rain came driving down over everything, shutting out mountain and valley from sight, and threatening to drench him to the skin.

Schuyler was a bold, decided young fellow, as we have seen, and he hesitated not to run across the clearing, and dash headlong into the hut, where he found the door as open as on his former visit, and everything silent.

Looking round, as soon as he had shaken himself clear of water, he found himself in a circular room of rough stones, without plastering of any sort, with a conical roof, supported by a central post of hemlock with the bark on. At one side of the apartment was a huge fireplace, in which blazed a big fire of logs, but the cabin was perfectly bare of furniture, save for the two square blocks of stone, roughly trimmed, one on each side of the fireplace.

The hussar took his seat on one of these, and dried himself at the fire, not without some trepidation, it must be owned. He was in the supposed stronghold of the very demon that he had seen with his own eyes the night before, and he knew not at what moment he might behold that terrible form darken the doorway, and be engaged in a contest for life with the terrible enigma.

But as time wore on, and nothing appeared, while the rain descended in torrents overhead, and the fire hissed and sputtered as it struggled against the tempest, the hussar's spirits insensibly rose, and with them his curiosity. He began to long to see the fairy form of Diana, and even caught himself wishing that the demon himself might appear.

But still the solemn rain poured down amid peals of thunder without cessation, and nothing came. The fire hissed and sputtered, and finally roared up the wide chimney in triumph, the soldier dried his steaming garments, and at last the storm slowly abated and passed off, settling into a gentle, drizzling rain, with a cold, gray sky that looked as if it had set in for a gloomy day.

Then Adrian Schuyler began to cogitate within himself what was best to do. He knew that if he could not get to Derryfield his labor was in vain, and he was equally aware that without a horse he could never expect to get there alive. Puzzling over his future course he was startled by the footsteps of a horse outside, and clutching his carbine with his manacled hands he started up and turned to the door. The chain that connected his irons just gave him sufficient play for his hands to fire a gun, and he expected an enemy.

What was his surprise at the group that met his view!

A horse without a rider, but saddled and bridled, was being led to the door of the hut by a huge black bear, the very creature that he had beheld gamboling with the girl the day before. The bear walked sedately forward, holding the bridle in his mouth, and the horse followed as if he was perfectly content with his clumsy conductor.

Full of amazement Schuyler stepped out of the hut and looked around. Not a human creature was to be seen, either in the clearing or at the edge of the woods, but even as he stood there an arrow rose in the air from the forest in a diagonal line, described a curve in the air, and fell at his feet.

A little white note was attached to the arrow.

Instinctively Schuyler picked it up, just as the tame bear stopped in front of him and stood rubbing his head against him in a friendly and confiding manner. The hussar opened the note and read as follows:

"Ride the horse in sight of Derryfield. Then strip off his bridle and turn him loose. I have ventured much for your sake. Keep our secret for mine."

"DIANA."

"Ay, by Heavens, I will, sweet Diana," cried the hussar, in loud tones intended to catch the ear of a person concealed in the woods. "A thousand blessings on your head. You have saved your country one disaster."

Without a moment's delay he took the bridle of the horse, cast it over the animal's head, and mounted.

The horse was a nobly-formed creature, but Schuyler could not help noticing its strange appearance and trappings. The animal was coal-black, without a white hair, and its housings were of the same somber color, with a shabracque of black velvet, worked with a skull and cross-bones on the corners. The same ghastly emblem was repeated on the frontlet of the bridle in white, and the curb was shaped like a human finger-bone.

The hussar was too much rejoiced, however, to find any fault with his equivocal mount. It was evidently a fine horse, and a moment later he was galloping through the woods to Derryfield.

CHAPTER VIII.

BURGOYNE'S IMP.

THE night brooded over the white tents and glimmering fires of a great army, which lay on the open ground near Saratoga. Street after street of tents and marquees, in martial array, stretched in long lines, now silent and dark, perpendicular to the color line. Outside the camp glimmered embers of the few fires that were left burning, and some distance off, on the plain, and amid the little patches of wood, were the brighter fires that told of the outlying pickets.

Occasionally the distant challenge of a sentry would be heard, to be followed by the same routine of "Who goes there?" "Rounds." "Halt. Rounds, advance one with the countersign. Countersign correct. Pass, Rounds, and a all's well!" The last words drawn out into a long, musical call, caught up and repeated along the line of outposts.

Inside the camp there were no lights, save in one spot, around the head-quarters tents, which

were clustered, in apparent confusion, in the vicinity of a large, half-ruined house, in which the commander kept his private quarters.

In these tents lights were burning, fires were kindled in front, and a number of officers were writing at different desks, while orderlies, at short intervals, entered and emerged from the quartermaster-general's tent.

In the large, old-fashioned parlor of the farmhouse, which was still comfortably furnished, and lighted with two wax-candles in silver candlesticks, a stout officer, in the scarlet uniform of a lieutenant-general, was walking up and down, with his hands behind his back, occasionally stopping to speak to a second officer in the dark-green uniform of the Hessians, who stood in the attitude of attention, to listen and answer the questions of his commander.

General Sir John Burgoyne was a handsome and intellectual man, a little past the prime of life, and by no means the tyrannical blockhead he has been represented. On the contrary, his literary abilities were quite considerable, his power of mind great; and, up to this time, his campaign had been conducted on sound military principles, his army having carried all before it.

The expression on his face that night, however, was one of decided anxiety, as he conversed with the officer before mentioned.

"How long has this been going on, baron?" he asked, at length.

"For a whole week, general, as near as I can find," was the reply, in very pure English, for Baron Reidesel prided himself on his accent.

"And you say that the Indians are beginning to leave us?"

"General, they have already left us, in large numbers. If something be not done to stop the panic, to-morrow they will leave in a body."

Sir John Burgoyne looked anxious and perplexed.

"Would to Heaven the Government would not employ them at all," he said. "They do us more harm with their atrocities, than their services balance. That unfortunate affair of Jenny McCrea has raised public feeling against us to a fearful extent, and now, when they might be most useful, they are frightened to death, and deserting, because of some masquerading rebel, who plays tricks on them with raw-head-and-bloody-bones apparitions. Have the soldiers heard of the panic, baron?"

"I regret to say, general, that our own outposts are catching the infection, since the Indian chief, Creeping Wolf, was killed in sight of our pickets. The man or demon, whichever it be, seemed to laugh at their bullets, and disappeared, so they say, in a blaze of red flame."

"Bah!" said Burgoyne, contemptuously, "'tis some conjuring trick. It can not be possible that our men are so foolish as to fear it. I must see that the rounds keep them awake. The fellows grow lazy, and dream. I shall visit the pickets myself to-night."

Baron Reidesel brightened.

"The very thing, general. If we keep up their spirits, they will recover. I only hope we can gain the Indians back."

"There is only one way, that I see, baron. We must catch this fellow who disturbs us, and hang him. Doubtless it is some rebel spy. One good thing: St. Leger sends me word that Fort Schuyler must soon surrender, and that will encourage the waverers. Then, Baum's dragoons must be at Bennington by this time. Let them bring us provisions, and I'll make short work of Schuyler's militia. Go and ask General Fraser, and Phillips, and the rest, to come with us, baron. I'll be ready in five minutes, and will make a grand round of all the outposts."

"Very good, general," was the reply, as the baron saluted and left the apartment, while Burgoyne, mechanically putting on his sword, stood by the fire, moodily cogitating.

He was roused from his reverie by a slight noise in the room, and looking, started in amazement.

A man of wonderful height, but gaunt as a skeleton, stood within six feet of him, looking at him out of great cavernous eyes, that glared from the midst of a deadly pale face. The man was muffled in a long black cloak, and his face was shadowed by a broad slouched hat. He stood regarding Burgoyne in silence.

"Who the devil are you?" asked the general, angrily, as soon as he had recovered his first shock.

"Your fate," answered the stranger, in a hollow voice.

"My fate!" echoed Burgoyne, contemptuously. "Perhaps, then, you are the masquerading rebel who has frightened my Indians?"

"I am the demon of the forest," answered the same hollow tones.

Burgoyne laughed scornfully.

"Indeed! Then you are just the man I want to see. Here, sentry!"

He strode to the door and threw it open, expecting to see the sentry usually stationed there.

There, across the threshold, lay the dead body of the soldier, in a pool of blood!

Horror-stricken, Sir John recoiled a moment. Then, whipping out his sword, he stalked up to the stranger, saying sternly:

"You have done this, but, by Heaven, you shall not escape."

The unknown remained impassive, with his arms folded, and only smiled sardonically.

"I told you I was your fate," he said. "Be warned in time. Go back while you may. A week hence will be too late."

"Fool," said the English general, contemptuously, "you may frighten superstitious savages with your hocus-pocus, not me. Surrender, or you are a dead man."

For all answer the stranger advanced on the general with folded arms, while fire and smoke began to issue from his mouth!

Incensed at the exhibition, Burgoyne made a violent thrust at the other with his sword.

The weapon snapped on the stranger's body as if it had been made of glass, and the next instant Burgoyne felt the pressure of long, skinny fingers on his throat, which he in vain tried to throw off, while the stranger, with gigantic strength, pressed him backward and backward, till he lay bent over his knee, slowly choking to death.

What would have been the result of this scene is not doubtful, but, just at that moment, the sound of footsteps was heard in the passage, with the clank of spurs and swords.

The terrible stranger cast down the nearly senseless body of the general with a crash to the ground, and stood up.

A moment later, several general officers came up the passage, and paused with horror at the sight which met them.

The murdered sentry lay across the threshold; Burgoyne, apparently dead, lay on the floor by the table, while over him towered a gigantic figure, extending black, shadowy wings, his pale face and burning eyes glaring from between upright black horns, while fire and smoke came from his mouth!

A moment later there was an unearthly laugh. The demon flapped his wings over the table, and out went the lights in intense darkness! Through the gloom came the hoarse shout:

"HA! HA! HA! HA!!! I GATHER THEM IN! I GATHER THEM IN!"

Then came a thundering report, as of the closing of a door and all was still. The apparition had vanished.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FIEND OF THE OUTPOSTS.

THE scene of confusion in the room was, for some minutes, quite animated. Burgoyne's subordinates rushed in, with drawn swords, calling for lights, and feeling around in the darkness with their weapons. Then came the tramp of feet and clash of arms in the passage, as a number of the head-quarters dragoons came running in, some carrying torches, and all with drawn pistols.

The room was thoroughly explored, and the mystery deepened, for not a trace of the intruder was found. There lay the murdered soldier, and there was the commander, in the arms of Baron Reidesel, slowly recovering from the rough handling he had undergone, but nothing remained of the demoniac visitor, save the overturned candlesticks. General Fraser—the quartermaster-general—General Phillips, Sir Francis Clark, and most of Burgoyne's staff, searched the room, trying to discover some means of exit, but found none. Every panel was sounded, but none seemed hollow, and the general himself put an end to the search by saying:

"Let it pass, gentlemen. Some ingenious scoundrel has been here, but he is doubtless away by this time. We will visit the pickets. It shall never be said that his majesty's officers were frightened by a juggler. Order up the horses."

"But you are not fit to ride out, general," objected Phillips.

"I am always fit to do my duty, sir," answered Burgoyne coldly. "Come, gentlemen, we have wasted too much time already."

The courage of the commander was evidently far from being shaken by his appalling visita-

tion. He had not said a word of its nature yet, and his staff were still puzzled, but Sir John's decided manner overbore all opposition, and they silently followed him to the horses, which were already in waiting. Then, as calmly as if nothing had occurred, the general proceeded on his trip to the outposts.

Burgoyne's manner was absent and thoughtful as he rode along, mechanically taking the direction of the outposts. Two dragoons rode in advance of the party to answer the challenges, and they soon arrived at the picket reserve, toward the American army.

The officer in command was called up and taken aside by the general, who questioned him closely.

"Has any disturbance occurred in your front to-night, sir?"

"Not yet, general, but—"

"But what, sir? Speak out."

"We are led to expect one, general. Last night, it seems that one of the Indian scouts was murdered in sight of our advanced posts. My predecessor warned me. A man on a black horse galloped by, and flames of fire seemed to come from his mouth, they say. The moon was up, and this Indian fired at the horseman, and then turned and ran in. The horseman followed him, changing into the likeness of—I only tell it as I was told, general—of the devil himself. Within fifty feet of this reserve he overtook the Indian and pierced him with a javelin. Then came a red flash of fire and the apparition threw the dead Indian over his saddle and fled like the wind, laughing in tremendous tones."

"Did the sentries fire at him?"

"Yes, sir. They sent a regular volley after him, but he only laughed louder and disappeared into the woods."

Sir John Burgoyne remained, silently musing over this story, but he made no comment. He was, in fact, quite puzzled.

Just as he was about to speak, an exclamation from one of the soldiers caused him to look round.

Then he struck his hand on his thigh with a muttered curse.

"By heavens! there he comes again. Now let us see if he fools me a second time."

It was indeed true. The same weird figure that has already been described, was galloping up on a black horse, flames and smoke proceeding from his mouth, while a stream of sparks came from the muzzle of his horse. He was coming from the extreme right of the picket line, galloping recklessly past the vedettes, while shouts, cries, and shots, followed his course as he came.

Burgoyne turned to Sir Francis Clark, his favorite aide-de-camp.

"Sir Francis," he said, in the sharp quick tones of a superior giving orders, "take the escort with you, and follow that fellow till you catch or kill him. He is a rebel spy, and doubtless wants to draw some of us into an ambush. If he leads you to the rebel lines, come back and report. I shall know how to deal with him. If not, follow him till your horses drop, and shoot down his animal, if you can. Away, sir."

The aide-de-camp bowed low and drew aside. The demoniac stranger was still coming fearlessly on in a direction that would bring him near to their front, and Clark, gathering the twenty dragoons that composed the escort, rode out to intercept him.

On came the demon in silence, the red sparks streaming from horse and rider, as if about to charge the whole party.

Then, as he came within sixty feet, he uttered a loud, taunting peal of laughter, and wheeled off toward the line of vedettes.

"Gallop, march!" shouted the aide-de-camp, firing his pistol, and dashing after. A volley of carbine-bullets whistled round the wild rider, but away he went, fast leaving his pursuers, the same loud, taunting laugh coming back on the wind.

Away on his track went the whole party of dragoons, headed by Sir Francis Clark, and in a few minutes the line of vedettes was reached. The alarm had already become general, and at least a dozen shots were fired at the flying horseman, while a single vedette rode at him with drawn saber.

Sir Francis, better mounted than the rest, was close behind, as the demon met the dragoon. He heard a clash of weapons, and the wild rider darted out unharmed, while the soldier threw up his arms and fell back off his saddle, dead!

There was no time to lose, however. Shouting to his men to follow, the English officer galloped on, keeping within thirty feet of the other, till they reached the woods. Then, with

a shrill laugh, the demon rider darted under the arches of the forest, and Clark followed.

The moon was not yet up, and the darkness in the woods was intense, but still the foremost horseman galloped on as if horse and rider well knew the way. Sir Francis followed, almost alone, for the dragoons were already strung out behind, owing to the severity of the pace.

Presently a crimson glow flashed up ahead, and the officer perceived a long, flaring flame, that streamed from the head of the demoniac figure in front, revealing the short, black horns and the long cloak streaming out behind, exactly like huge wings in appearance.

Amazed, but still resolute, the aide-de-camp followed on, still riding at the same rapid pace through the arches of the wood.

The hoof-beats of the following dragoons grew fainter and fainter, and still the two horsemen galloped on in a direction due west, away from both armies. How long they rode, Clark could not tell, but hour after hour passed without any change in their relative positions. The aide-de-camp rode a splendid horse, one of the few thoroughbreds then in America, and horses of that blood, as is well known, will gallop till they drop.

At the pace at which they were going, four hours of this work took them many a mile from settlements of any kind, till they entered a broken, limestone region. Then, of a sudden, the red flame went out on the demon's head, and, with a loud, mocking laugh, horse and rider plunged into a narrow, black gully, almost hidden in bushes.

A moment later, Clark pulled up, thoroughly bewildered, in thick darkness. The light that had guided him had disappeared, and he was alone in the woods.

Too wary to venture himself in an unknown region, the officer sat in his saddle, musing on the best course to pursue. Then, with a muttered "That's it," he turned his horse's head on the way homeward.

The animal, with the well-known instinct of his species, took up his march without hesitation, as Clark had foreseen. The officer drew his sword and gave a slash at every tree he passed, leaving a white streak in the bark.

"You may hide, master juggler," he said to himself; "but if I don't track you to your haunt by daylight, it will be because there is no virtue in a blaze."

CHAPTER X.

MOLLY STARK'S HUSBAND.

THE little mountain town of Derryfield, (now Manchester) was full of the sounds of the drum and fife, while companies of tall, raw-boned countrymen, some with uniforms, more without, but all bearing arms and belts, were marching to and fro in the streets, and on the green, to the lively notes of "Yankee Doodle."

In the best parlor of the "Patriot Arms," the principal tavern of the village, a remarkably tall and scraggy-looking officer, in the uniform of a Continental general, was standing before the fire, with one foot on the huge andiron, looking shrewdly at our friend, Adrian Schuyler, who stood before him, still shackled.

The scraggy officer had very broad shoulders and huge hands and feet, but the flesh seemed to have been forgotten in the formation of his powerful frame. He had a tall, narrow forehead and a very stern, shrewd-looking face of a Scotch cast of feature, with high cheekbones, and very sharp black eyes. His nose and chin were both long, the latter very firm withal. His manner was remarkably sharp and abrupt. The nervous energy of the man seemed to be ever overflowing in impatience and fiery ardor. Such was Brigadier-General—afterward Major-General—John Stark, the first leader of militia during the Revolutionary War.

"Well, sir," he said, as Schuyler concluded his relation, "I'm very sorry that the rascals stole your commission, but your face is sufficient. I believe your story. What does Schuyler want me to do?"

"To join him at Bemis' Heights, general," said the hussar, with equal business-like promptness.

"Well, sir, I'll see him hanged first!" said Stark, with a snap of his teeth.

Adrian hardly knew what to say to the eccentric brigadier, as he stood there nodding his head as if to confirm his words.

"General," he began, "if any unfortunate accident deprives me of credit—if you don't believe I am properly authorized—"

"I told you I did, young man," said Stark, with all his old abruptness. "You're enough

like Phil Schuyler to let me see you're his cousin."

"Then, general, what am I to understand?"

"That I'll see them all hanged first."

And the iron brigadier compressed his teeth like a vise.

Adrian Schuyler began to wax indignant. Without even waiting for a smith to file off his irons, he had ridden to Derryfield, turning loose the black horse as he had been bidden.

Seeking General Stark in the town in his equivocal guise, he had been arrested by the patrol and brought in as a prisoner, when he had told the whole story without reserve.

The presence of his gray charger—which had been captured the night before around the general's quarters—confirmed the truth of part of his statement, while Stark's clear penetration told him that the handsome, open face of Schuyler was not that of a traitor. Being so fully believed, the general's brusque answer to his message vexed and surprised him beyond measure.

"General Stark," he began indignantly, "do you call that a proper answer to the lawful orders of a man like General Schuyler? Are you aware—"

Stark interrupted him in his gruff, abrupt manner:

"Keep cool, young man. I know Phil better than you. He's a good man—a sight too good to be hustled from pillar to post by those asses of Congressmen. They sha'n't hustle me. I hold my commission from New Hampshire, and intend to stay here."

"And do you mean to say, General Stark," asked the hussar fiercely, "that I am to go back and report to General Schuyler that you refuse to come to his aid when the enemy are pressing him hard, and you have three thousand men under your orders?"

Stark turned his head to the young man.

"You can tell him and any one else," he said emphatically, "that John Stark's a man, not a post. They can send me all the orders they like, and I'll see them hanged before I obey them."

Adrian Schuyler was now completely indignant, but he remained calm. With quiet dignity he said:

"General Stark, I have only one request to make of you in that case."

"Umph—umph! What is it?" grunted Stark gruffly.

"Allow your men to restore me my horse, which I see at your quarters, and let me ride back to my chief."

"Umph—umph! Very good, very good. Have your irons off first, eh?"

"No, sir!" cried Adrian fiercely; "not a favor from you but my own charger. I would sooner die than accept aught else from a man who deserted his country in the hour of trial."

"Umph—umph! Gritty lad—gritty lad—like your pluck, by jingo! Keep cool; better have a smith and a dinner, eh? Look faint—must have dinner!"

This was indeed true, for Adrian had not touched food for twenty-four hours. He was too angry, however, to accept the offer, and turned away to the door, when Stark's sharp, metallic voice asked:

"Well, youngster, what are you going to tell Phil, if you get there alive?"

"That you refuse to fight," said Adrian, angrily.

"Oh, no, no—not a bit of it," said Stark, in his quick manner; "not by a big sight, youngster. You stay with me, and I show you as much fighting as any man wants, in two days."

Adrian paused, irresolute. There was something in the voice of Stark that sounded as if he was mocking him.

"What do you mean, general?" he asked sullenly. "If you are playing with me, allow me to say that it is in bad taste to an officer in my position, who has incurred danger to reach you."

The eccentric general changed his manner immediately. He came up to Schuyler and forced him, with rough kindness, into a chair by the table.

"You sit there," he said gruffly. "I want to talk turkey to you."

Then he rung a bell, and as the orderly entered, he gruffly ordered up the "nearest smith and a good dinner." The orderly did not seem to be amazed at the singular order. He was an old dragoon, who had once been a ranger of Stark's company in the French and Indian war. He saluted, and wheeled swiftly about, departing without a word.

"Now, see here, captain," began the eccentric general, as the door closed, "don't misunder-

stand me. I'm going to keep you here, because I know you can't get back to your general now. Burgoyne has a body of his infernal dragoons on the road here, and to-night I march to meet them. I'll not put myself under the orders of Congress—that's flat. They've cheated Arnold and me out of our fairly-won commissions, and my State has granted what they refuse. I'm going to whip these British and Hessian dragoons out of their boots, on my own hook, and if Congress don't like it, they can lump it. That's flat, too. When I've whipped the enemy, you can carry the news to Phil, if you please, and I shall be glad of your help. What do you say now?"

Adrian had been silent during this singular address, which was spoken in short jerks, the general stumping round the room all the time.

When he had finished, the hussar answered:

"I say you're a strange man, general; but I'll stay with you, if you like. At all events, I can help you, till the road's clear."

Stark laughed in his abrupt manner, and clapped the other on the shoulder, saying:

"You're the right grit, lad, and if I don't show you a few English flags, the day after tomorrow, it's because Molly Stark will be a widow."

The door opened, and in clamped a big country blacksmith, with his basket of tools, while his blue coat, brass scales, and tall hat-plume showed that he had just come in from "train-ing."

"Hang it, Zeke, we don't want to shoe a horse here," said Stark, grinning. "This gentleman has been unfortunate enough to fall into British hands, and they've ornamented him with bracelets. File them off, so he can dine with me."

"That's me, ginerel," said the smith, affably. "Ef I don't hev them irons off in five minutes, you kin take my hat."

He was as good as his word, filing away at the irons with great vigor, and when the tavern waiter entered with a large tray, some five minutes later, Adrian Schuyler was rubbing his released wrists with a sense of gratitude, while the smith, who had been cheerfully whistling over his task, and replying affably to his general's dry jokes, had just picked up his basket to leave.

Adrian Schuyler, who was used to the formal discipline of the great Frederick's army, was wonderfully amused at the free and easy ways of the general of militia, who behaved like an easy-going old father among his uncouth soldiers. He had yet to learn that in that singular man, John Stark, were concentrated the only qualities that enable a man to drive up raw militia to the cannon's mouth, with the steadiness of veterans.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MOUNTAIN QUEEN'S WARNING.

THE rain poured steadily down in torrents, and the heavens were all one unvarying mass of leaden clouds. The outlines of the Green Mountains were wrapped in driving fleeces of gray mist, and the chilly northeast wind drove the rain aslant, splashing up the pools that collected in every hollow.

Adrian Schuyler, at the head of a small party of horsemen, was slowly riding along on his recovered charger, through the fields near the little town of Bennington. He was wrapped in his long cloak, and the rain dripped from his tall hussar-cap in a continued spout. His followers were awkward, countrified Green Mountain Boys, but their peculiar leathern costume told that they were all hunters, and not agriculturists, by profession. Hunters they were, and first-class shots, keen at detecting trails, and model scouts.

They rode on behind their leader, in single file, watching every little patch of wood that might hide an enemy. Two men rode on each flank at easy rifle-shot distance, beating up the brush-wood, and leaving nothing unsearched.

Their numbers and actions sufficiently told that they composed a reconnoitering party, under command of the ex-hussar. It was a noticeable fact in the history of the Revolutionary war, that those officers who had served in European armies were treated with great distinction whenever they could be induced to accept commands, and that their career in American armies was generally very creditable, with the exception of those coming from the English service. The latter, as in the cases of Lee and Gates, were almost uniformly unfortunate, while those provincials, such as Washington, Putnam, Stark, and Schuyler, who had learned war in the French and Indian struggle, under

English tuition, were as uniformly good leaders. All which facts tend to prove that the English system of war is inferior to that pursued, in Germany especially, on the European continent; as also that American intellect is able to attain a good result, even in a bad school.

Adrian Schuyler was a model light cavalry officer, and conducted his party with due caution. A rifle-shot ahead was the best scout of the party, and every now and then, silent signals were exchanged between the advance and the main body, that communicated some intelligence. Presently the scout in front halted, and crouched on his horse's neck. Instantly, at a low word from Adrian, his party stopped, and the officer rode slowly up to the side of his advanced vedette, to see what was the matter.

"Thar they be, Cap," said the scout, in a low tone, pointing to his left front, "they're gone into camp, as slick as molasses, and their Dutch sentry ain't got no eyes, I guess, for he's a-blinkin' this way, jest like an owl on a fine day, and hain't seen me."

Schuyler, sheltering himself behind the other, and bowing his head, so as to hide his tall cap, slipped off his horse and leveled a telescope over the croup of the scout's steady animal. A bluish line of smoke, clearly visible against the cold gray background of mist and rain, pointed out the position of the camp of Baum and his Hessians, detached from the army of Burgoyne, to seize the stores at Bennington.

They lay in a square, compact mass, in a bend of the little rivulet, called the Wollonsac, which covered their position. A green grove, at the border of the stream, furnished them with some shelter from the rain, for otherwise they were compelled to trust to huts of straw.

A brown line of fresh earth, covering the whole front of their position, showed that their commander was a cautious man, who knew the value of intrenchments.

"There they are, sure enough, Kerr," said Schuyler, as he shut up his glass; "but I don't see any Indians."

"I'd admire to see the reptyles," said Kerr, spitefully, "sneaking round when our boys are here, Cap. No, no, thur ain't one of 'em left near us, since the Mountain Devil's up and arter 'em."

"The Mountain Devil! Who's that?" asked Adrian, surprised. It was the first time he had heard allusions from others to the singular being that had effected his own release from his late captors.

"Wal, Cap, that's hard to say," responded the scout. "Some say he's a real devil, some he's only a feller that's got a spite against the Injins. All I know is, that he's been round lately, and skeered every one on 'em out of the country. Folks say he's b'en dodgin' round Burgoyne's men, playin' the same games, and that thur leavin' for hum."

"Has he been seen near our quarters?" asked the hussar.

"Nary time, Cap. He may be a devil, but if so, he's a mighty friendly one fur our side. He don't only kill Injins and Tories, and leaves our folks alone. We hain't so much as seen him, though prisoners tells mighty tough stories about him, how he's got horns and huffs, and sends fire out of his mouth, and sich like."

Schuyler did not tell the scout of his own experience. He was too much puzzled at the nature of the apparition.

He remained watching the camp of the English dragoons in silence, feeling certain that his presence was unseen by the army, then turning, he led his horse away out of sight.

He was about to lead his party round to reconnoiter from another quarter, when one of the flanking scouts was seen to go off, at a gallop, to the right, into the woods, as if in chase of something. A moment later, a black horse, which the hussar recognized as the one he had turned loose to go back to the Haunted Mountain, dashed out of the woods, bearing a lady on his back, and came galloping up, pursued by the scout.

Schuyler waved his hand to the latter to halt, for he recognized the figure of the lady. Then, up galloped the unknown fair one who called herself Diana, and checked her horse with fearless grace in front of the party.

Diana was more beautiful, if possible, in the habiliments of civilization, than she had been in her woodland guise. She was dressed in a black riding-habit of velvet, laced across the breast in strange imitation of a skeleton, in silver, and wore a little black hussar cap, with a skull and cross-bones in white on the front, the very costume afterward used by the "Black Brunswickers" of Waterloo renown. She was dripping with rain.

Without the slightest hesitation she addressed Schuyler earnestly.

"Sir," she said, "you are in danger, and you know it not. A party of savages, led by the Tory spy, Colonel Butler, are already between you and your own forces, to cut you off. Retire, while there is time. I am sent to warn you. They are now in yonder wood."

As she spoke, she pointed to a piece of woods in their rear, and wheeled her horse as if to flee. Adrian Schuyler impulsively caught at the bridle.

"Tell me, at least," he entreated, "that you will not run into danger on our account. We are soldiers, you a woman."

"No time for talking," she answered, sharply. "Look yonder."

He looked, and the edge of the wood was full of Indians.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PARTISAN.

At the sight of the Indians, the American Rangers instinctively clustered together, and the flankers came galloping in.

That the enemy were in force was evident from the boldness with which they showed themselves, coming running out, and spreading into a long skirmish line, that threatened to cut off the rangers from any return to their own army.

It was evident that they were in a trap from which there was no escape, except by cutting their way out, twenty white men against nearly a hundred Indians. The hunters that followed Adrian, bold as they were by nature, began to evince symptoms of shrinking from the test. Brave militia, as far as service in war went, they were as yet only the raw stuff that veterans are made of. Many cheeks were pale, and there was much nervous fumbling at weapons, but they kept silence, and anxiously watched the countenance of their young leader for advice and succor.

Adrian Schuyler had not served, as volunteer and officer, in the famous corps of the Zeiten Hussars, without profiting by the counsels of the best leaders of light cavalry in Europe. He scanned the advancing line of the enemy with great coolness, riding out in front of his men, and using his telescope.

His example was inspiring to his men, and insensibly the most nervous forgot his tremors when he saw the coolness of his captain.

The Indians were as yet out of gunshot, they were advancing on foot, and some five or six horsemen were visible in their line. Adrian watched them close, and saw that if he could break through the line he could laugh at pursuit, all his men being mounted and most of the enemy on foot. He turned his glass to the Hessian camp, and saw no symptoms of disturbance there. The stolid dragoon sentries paced to and fro on the parapet of the breastwork, and did not seem to notice the impending conflict outside.

Then he turned to speak to his men, and met the blue eyes of Diana. She was watching him apprehensively, as if she sympathized with his danger, and longed to avert it, while powerless. Schuyler pointed to the distant woods, saying:

"For God's sake, young lady, ride away out of danger. The bullets will soon be flying, and they will not respect even your beauty."

"Why not come with me?" she asked. "I can lead you away by a path where there are no Indians."

"Thanks for your offer," said the hussar, gratefully. "It is one that I would accept were it not that I have promised General Stark to be back by a certain hour at his head-quarters. My way lies through the enemy."

"And do you really mean to charge those fierce creatures?" she asked in a tone of wonder.

"I really do," he said, quietly. "There's not half as much danger as you would think. Rapid motion will take us safe through."

"Then I go with you," said the girl, firmly.

Adrian laughed. "Nonsense, Diana. Your presence here shows that you're on our side, but you can do no good with us. Depart while you may. They are almost within gunshot."

"I am going with you," said Diana, firmly. "If it is a mere matter of fast riding, I can ride too."

"But you may escape by going the other way," objected Schuyler.

"Which I shall not do," she said. "I've taken a fancy to see what you soldiers call a battle, and you cannot stop me, so you may as well attend to your men."

The hussar shrugged his shoulders and turned

away to his men just as several white puffs of smoke came from the enemy's skirmishers, followed by the thump, thump, of two or three bullets tearing up the earth around them. The horses began to fidget, and the faces of the men were somewhat uneasy. Adrian saw that they must be encouraged at once, or possibly desert in confusion.

He drew his sword and threw back the dripping cloak from his arm, while he spoke to the rangers.

"Men," he said, "it's time we were doing something. Never flinch from a few bullets at long range. Those fellows are firing to no purpose. Fall in, and deploy as skirmishers."

The rangers promptly obeyed the order. Adrian knew that in times of danger men should be occupied, and he insisted on his line being formed in perfect order, even when the bullets began to whistle unpleasantly near. The longer the men were exposed to a harmless fire the greater grew their confidence, and contempt for the enemy. As soon as the line was formed the hussar gave the signal to fall back, which, as he anticipated, provoked a loud yell, and rattling volley from the enemy, who took the run in their eagerness. The rangers retired at a slow trot, the hussar keeping in the rear and watching his foe keenly, till he saw that the rapid motion was producing the desired effect.

The excited enemy were firing wild.

"Halt!" he suddenly shouted. "Face about, lads! We've gone far enough. Now follow me, and charge!"

A moment later, with the fair Diana at his side, the ex-hussar was bearing down on the Indians at full speed, followed by his rangers. Schuyler's men all carried broad-swords, in the use of which they were somewhat clumsy, it is true, but strong arms made up the deficiency.

The sudden change of demeanor on the part of the horsemen produced a result highly favorable to them. The Indians, who always have a dread of dragoons, fired a harmless, scattering volley, and were then left with empty pieces while the patriots charged home.

"Now we have them," cried Adrian, exultingly. "Ride over them, lads, and then on to our own camp. If a man gets wounded, I'm mistaken."

The example of their leader stimulated the men to greater courage, and they uttered a hearty cheer as they drove on. The rain beat in their faces, and the wind whistled past as they went, but the enemy were just as much in the rain, and the Americans knew that the fire would damp the powder of their foes.

It took but a minute to decide the question. At the full gallop the whole party of the rangers neared the enemy, and far in front rode Adrian Schuyler, closely followed by Diana.

The few horsemen who were with the Indians seemed to be officers, for they were seen dashing up and down the line encouraging the wavering savages to stand. Adrian noticed one tall, powerful figure among them, which he recognized as the Tory, Butler, and he bent his course toward that part of the line, knowing that if he could overthrow the bold leader, the followers would probably be demoralized.

A moment later, he charged against the partisan, who met him, wielding a long broadsword.

Adrian was a splendid swordsman, and equally good horseman, and his steed was perfectly trained, no slight advantage in a single combat, mounted. His antagonist, however, proved to be equally matched. In height and weight he was far superior to Adrian, and his blows came like those of sledge-hammers, while his big horse obeyed the rein easily.

But the hussar didn't wait long to fight. There were too many enemies near him. His men had already dashed through the line, and were past him on their way to Stark's forces, when his antagonist suddenly, without any visible cause, turned pale, dropped his sword-hand, and wrenched his horse back several paces, while he glared over his enemy's shoulder, as if at some frightful vision.

Involuntarily Schuyler glanced back himself, and beheld the beautiful face of the mysterious Diana close by, deadly pale with excitement, while her long hair streamed over the cheeks, wet and clinging with the rain, like that of a drowned person.

He turned once more to his foe, and beheld the hitherto fierce face drawn down with abject fear, as the dreaded partisan ground out the single word "Diana!" and then turned to flee.

Adrian's horse bounded after him, and the hussar discharged a blow that cut open the

other's shoulder, which, to his amazement, Butler never even tried to parry.

The spiteful hiss of a bullet past his ear, cutting away a curl in its passage, told him that he was not wise to tarry longer. Turning away, he found himself and Diana almost alone amid the enemy, who were rallying from their discomfiture, and hastening to cut them off. The hussar uttered a shout of defiance, seized the bridle of his fair companion, and galloped away after his rangers.

CHAPTER XIII.

BENNINGTON.

THE stars were shining bright and clear in the heavens, where the gray light of early dawn was beginning to pale a few on the eastern horizon, and the remains of the rain-clouds were driving toward the sea under the chilly north-west wind that ended the rain-storm.

A numerous force of men lay clustered in bivouac round the smoking camp-fires, and at one fire, separated from the rest, General Stark was walking to and fro, talking to Adrian Schuyler.

"And you say the girl galloped away from you, and would not even give you her name?" he said, inquiringly.

"True, general."

"Why didn't you chase her and bring her in?"

"For two reasons, general. First, she had just rendered us an important service. Secondly, her horse was too quick for any except mine."

"Umph! sorry for it. Never mind, she's a friend of yours anyway, and we'll pay her for it, Schuyler, if she comes around. But you have brought me good news. I'll have those fellows before the sunset to-night, and Burgoyne may whistle for his rations."

At that moment the clear note of a bugle, a little distance off, rose sweetly over the silent landscape, blowing the reveille, and Stark paused and consulted his watch, with a low chuckle, saying:

"I tell you what, Cap, our boys may not be as smart-looking as your Prussians, but you'll find them pretty prompt for all that. I don't believe your great Frederick could put his men under arms any quicker than Jack Stark puts his Green-Mountain boys into the ranks. Look there!"

Adrian looked round, and smiled in approbation.

At the close of the long-call the whole bivouac had changed its appearance as if by magic, and where there had been rows of slumbering figures, now stood long ranks of armed men, rapidly assuming the order of perfectly straight lines.

The voices of the sergeants calling the rolls rose on the morning air before all the bugles had ceased blowing, and the camp assumed an appearance of order and bustle not often seen outside of regular troops.

Schuyler expressed his surprise at the discipline exhibited after so short a training, and Stark abruptly broke him off.

"No wonder, lad—no wonder. These are not German louts, picked up anywhere, with heads like oxen. These are free men, come down from the times of Cromwell, with hardly a change. It needs only that they should see the necessity of order, and they'll come to it fast enough. Ha! what's that?"

His last words were elicited by the sound of a shot coming from the picket-line, closely followed by two more.

In a moment Adrian Schuyler was on his feet, and standing close to his horse, which was tied to a tree near by.

The little squad of rangers under his orders—the only cavalry in Stark's command—was already ranged near by, answering roll-call; and the captain sprang on his horse, with the intention of calling them out, when the voice of Stark prevented him.

"Let him go, Cap. 'Tis but a single man, coming this way."

Adrian followed the general's pointing finger, and distinguished the outline of a galloping horseman, rapidly approaching the fire in the gray dawn.

Presently up dashed a man on a black horse, and halted suddenly in front of the fire. Of his figure all that could be seen was a shadow in a loose cloak, and a shadowy hat was slouched over a face of marble paleness.

The strange horseman addressed himself to General Stark, as directly as if he knew him well, saying, in a deep, hollow voice:

"John Stark, if you wish to save your country, march on the enemy at once. Reinforcements are coming up, and will be here by sunset. Exterminate what are here, before the

others come up, and God speed you. Farewell!"

Then, before even the quick-witted general could guess his intention, he was off, and galloping through the camp at full speed.

Stark shook his head as he looked after him.

"Yonder goes a strange man," he said to Adrian, "and if I did not know him, I should say a spy."

"What, do you really know him?" asked Adrian eagerly. "I, too, recognized his face, but only as that of an apparition that—"

"What apparition?" queried the general sharply. "What do you mean by talking of such stuff, sir?"

"Only this, general," said the hussar stoutly, "that the face I just now saw under that shadowy hat is none other than that of the creature your men call the Mountain Demon. I saw it only once, but I shall not forget it in a hurry."

Stark uttered his customary grunt, but made no further observation on the occurrence, and very soon the duties of the camp took them both away.

By the time the sun was up, the whole force was scattered round the fires, busily engaged in cooking breakfast, and a short time after columns of march were formed, and the little army of patriots took up their march to the gay tune of the drum and fife.

The British bull-dog and the German boarhound stood stubbornly at bay behind the brown trenches in the little curve of the Wol-lonsac. At the summit of a hillock stood a battery of four brass pieces, behind which, rank upon rank of riderless horses stood patiently at their posts, awaiting the result of the battle. The whole of Baum's force was made up of dragoons, who fought desperately on foot, to defend their led horses.

All around the camp the grim circle of patriots was pressing closer and closer on the British, in a ring of white smoke, through which the red flashes of rifles shot incessantly. The rattle of musketry was, and had been for three mortal hours, "one long clap of thunder," as Stark himself afterward wrote.

And still the battle hung in suspense. The general's horse was shot under him, and he rushed about on foot, his drawn sword gleaming in his hand, encouraging his troops to stand up against the fearful fire. The Americans had no artillery, and no bayonets on their rifles, but they rushed on to the charge with just as much vigor as veterans, and still the battle wavered.

It was just at this doubtful moment, when the least influence, one way or the other was important, that a loud, ringing cheer was heard over the roar of the musketry-firing, and through the white smoke rushed several horsemen at full speed, riding up the hillocks on whose summit the English battery was planted.

First on a charger as black as jet, rode a tall, thin officer in the broad-plumed hat and black curling wig of many a long year before. His black velvet coat and bright steel breast-plate were those one sees in the portraits of Louis the Fourteenth of France, and he waved a long rapier in his hand, of the same antique fashion.

Even in the momentary glimpse caught of him amid the battle smoke, men marveled at the paleness of his face, and at the weird fire in his cavernous black eyes.

Following him closely was Adrian Schuyler, with his score of mounted rangers, but all seemed to be under the sway and control of the pale man on the black horse. A moment later, the black charger was among the guns, and the long blade flashed in the air, as the pale rider smote right and left with fearful strength.

Then like a wave, the handful of horse dashed on the dismounted dragoons and cut their way through. It was but a trifling aid, but all-sufficient.

The sight encouraged one party and discouraged the other proportionately.

With a roar and a volley, the Americans followed, and the German dragoons broke and fled.

Past the swaying, helpless herd of led horses they were driven, too much harassed to be allowed time to mount. Pell-mell after them followed the Green Mountain Boys, and Bennington was won.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PANIC.

BEHIND the ramparts of Fort Schuyler, near the present site of the town of Rome, an officer in the uniform of a Continental colonel, was

standing in the twilight, looking out over the beleaguering camp of St. Leger, with his Tories and Indians, at the siege batteries. The increasing gloom alone made the situation tenable, for all day long the Indian riflemen had been lying down outside the fort, behind stumps and logs, picking off every one who ventured to show his head above the rampart.

The position of the fort had been growing more desperate daily, for its defenses were but slight at the best of times, and St. Leger's artillery had been battering at them steadily ever since the siege first began, three weeks before. Provisions were growing scarce, and the Indian scouts, constantly creeping closer to the fort, rendered a sortie for forage impossible.

Colonel Gansevoort, the American leader, looked anxious and gloomy. Before his men and the enemy he kept up appearances nobly, but now that he was alone, the desolate nature of his position rushed on his mind with overpowering force, and compelled a feeling of almost despair.

Two weeks before, the column sent to his relief under General Herkimer, had been repulsed and almost annihilated, at the desperate battle of Oriskany, and since that time not a word had reached him from the outer world, save through the threatening dispatches of his foes.

All round the fort stretched the silent, primeval forest, for Fort Schuyler was then at the extreme bounds of civilization. Out of those woods came nothing but the whoop of the beleaguering savage, the spiteful crack of the rifle-shot, and the booming report of the brass howitzers.

There was not a ray of hope apparent to tell the Americans whether they were not vainly persisting in a struggle which could have but one termination, torture and death at the stake from the merciless allies of the English general.

As Gansevoort was thus looking from the low log parapet at the twinkling circle of English fires, he was surprised to hear a low voice from the ditch of the bastion on which he stood, calling him by name. Starting, he hastily asked:

"Who's there?"

"A friend," replied the low voice, "with news from Schuyler. Come down to the sally-port, for I must away when I have given my news."

Without a moment's hesitation the colonel left the rampart, and hastened down to the sally-port spoken of by the other. This was a low, heavy door on the inner side of the ditch, approached by an underground passage, and protected by the fire of two faces of the fort, and the colonel emerged from this, finding himself confronted by a figure of great height, but thin and attenuated as a specter. This figure was wrapped in a long, flowing cloak, and its face was hidden by a broad, shadowy hat.

Under any circumstances, it is probable that Gansevoort would have felt some distrust of the other, but as it was, he was too eager to hear the news to be particular about how it came.

"The news, quick, man, what is it?" he whispered. "Good or bad?"

"Good," answered the stranger, in the same low tone. "Read this letter."

As he spoke, he extended both arms, the shadowy cloak hanging from them, so as to conceal what passed from the view of any lurking besieger. Gansevoort then noticed, for the first time, that the other bore at his belt a small dark lantern. He eagerly grasped the letter which the stranger extended to him, and beheld the well-known bold, clerkly hand of General Schuyler. Quickly he ran it over.

"STILLWATER, August 15th, 1777.

"DEAR COLONEL:—A body of troops left this place yesterday, and others are following to raise the siege of Fort Schuyler. Everybody here believes you will defend it to the last, and I strictly enjoin you to do so. General Burgoyne is at Fort Edward—our army at Stillwater—great reinforcements coming from the eastward, and we trust all will be well, and the enemy repulsed. Yours faithfully,

"PH. SCHUYLER.

"COLONEL GANSEVOORT,

"Com'd'g Post at Fort Schuyler,

"By Capt. Erastus Benedict, A. D. C."

For a moment Gansevoort's feelings overcame him. The revulsion from anxiety to hope was so great that he nearly choked, in his efforts to suppress emotion. Then he turned to the tall stranger, seized his hand, and shook it earnestly.

"God in heaven bless you, captain," he said, with trembling voice. "You have saved a soldier from disgrace, and America from destruction. We were nearly spent. Defend it to the last! Ay, Captain Benedict, I will do it now with tenfold the vigor I did. God bless the

general for his confidence in me, and all the brave fellows with him."

The stranger's hand, long, cold, and bony, lay passively in the grasp of the colonel, till the latter had finished. Then he said, quietly:

"You mistake. I am not Captain Benedict. He is dead."

"Who are you, then?" asked the American, starting.

"A friend to the cause. Let that suffice," said the stranger, in his deep, hollow voice, dropping his cloak so as to conceal his lantern. "I found Benedict in the hands of the Mohawks, dead and scalped. I killed them, and brought his letter. Now, farewell. Whatever you see to-night do not wonder. It bodes no ill, save to the enemy."

He turned and vanished in the thick darkness that had now fallen over fort and forest, and Gansevoort slowly and thoughtfully left the spot and re-entered the fort.

A few minutes later, he was reading aloud to his officers the welcome letter of Schuyler, and gladness diffused itself in every heart.

The star that rose in the east at sunset was high in the zenith over the besiegers' camp, and the Indians were slumbering around their campfires, while the nodding picket-sentry hardly kept awake on his post, when the loud blast of a horn echoed through the silent arches of the forest, followed by a chorus of yells and cries that roused every one in an instant.

Bewildered and half-awake, Tory and Indian scrambled up to their feet, and the English general rushed out of his tent, half-dressed, to know the meaning of the outcry.

Two Indians, yelling as they ran, were coming in from the outposts at headlong speed, and their cries seemed to spread a panic among all the neighboring savages, for wherever they were heard, Mohawk and Oneida, Seneca and Tuscarora, alike joined the swelling mob that came rushing through the camp.

"The rebels! the rebels are coming! Run! Run!" was the cry that was speedily taken up by white and red alike, when they heard the alarm more plainly.

Although not a foe was to be seen, there were sounds of a trampling in the woods, the snapping of sticks and an occasional shout in the distance, which gave color to the panic.

In vain St. Leger and Sir John Johnson rushed to and fro, trying to arrest the causeless rout. The tumult was too great for their voices to be heard. The Indians, from the very first, commenced a retreat *en masse*, as if by previous concert; then one regiment of rangers gave way and scattered through the woods, despite the cries of their officers, going to the rear at a run, shouting, "The rebels are coming!"

In less than ten minutes from the first blast of the horn, the two English leaders were left almost alone, and when the glare of torches in the distance with the sight of armed men on horseback showed them that an enemy was indeed approaching, they found that they had not sufficient following to resist a squadron of dragoons. Utterly amazed and demoralized, the two Englishmen were fain to follow the example of their followers, and hastily mounting their horses, galloped away to join the rout.

Meanwhile the trampling came nearer and nearer, and soon, out of the woods rode Adrian Schuyler at the center of a long, scattered skirmish-line of American Rangers, in the white frocks of Morgan's Rifles, every man bearing a torch of pitch-pine.

They advanced warily, but boldly, only to find the enemy's camp deserted, the idle artillery silent in the batteries, the ground strewn with forsaken weapons and stores.

Adrian rode up to the bastion on whose summit stood the amazed garrison, and waved his torch in salute, crying:

"Gentlemen, you are saved. We are the advance of the relief-column under General Arnold. Burgoyne has lost all his cavalry at Bennington, and lies at Stillwater surrounded by our men. Hurrah for Independence!"

The cheer was given with a will.

CHAPTER XV.

THE EXPEDITION.

Two months have passed away, and the scarlet and gold of the fall is on all the vast forest that borders the Mohawk river.

In the English camp near Bemis Hights, General Burgoyne is holding a council of war with his officers, and the tall, burly form of Colonel Butler, in the dark green frock of the Johnson Greens, is conspicuous among the scarlet of the generals. Butler has his left arm in a sling still, from the effect of Adrian Schuyler's cut,

and his face is heavy and lowering as ever, as he urges some measure on the council with great energy.

"I hardly think, colonel, that the end warrants the risk attending the expedition," said Burgoyne at last. "This unfortunate affair at Bennington has crippled us badly, and we must not risk the little cavalry we have left on an uncertainty. The enemy's parties are bold and wary, and there is no assurance that the whole party will not be taken prisoners or killed."

"General Burgoyne," said the partisan, grimly, "I stake my head on the result. I have not lived in this country for twenty years without knowing every secret path. I will take your men by a way that no rebel shall hear of, and if I do not clear up this mystery of the Mountain Demon I will consent to be shot."

"Your death would be a poor satisfaction for failure," cried Sir John. "What do you expect if you succeed?"

"To save the army," said Butler, boldly. "A month ago we were in good position, our allies swarming all round our flanks, bringing us news of the enemy. This juggler or demon has done more to drive away the faithless hounds of savages than anything else."

While he remains a mystery not an Indian will stay in your camp. Let me once expose and unmask him and they will flock to your standards anew. General, I speak as I feel, strongly. Twice has this fellow caused me to fail in my plans by his diabolical appearance, frightening away all my followers, and once even myself. At last I hit upon a clew to his identity, and Sir Francis Clark's story confirms my suspicions. The place where he disappeared is well known to me, and if you will give me one squadron of dragoons I engage to bring the impostor back, and with him our reassured Indian allies. I say that the gain is well worth the risk."

When the partisan had finished there was a deep silence in the room. Even Burgoyne felt the force of his words. It was true that his Indian allies had deserted him wholesale, till he was left alone in an enemy's country, without the means of obtaining intelligence, while his situation daily grew more desperate.

Excepting for the short intervals at the battle of Bennington and the flight of St. Leger, the ubiquitous visitor who had haunted his outposts so long made its appearance nightly, sometimes in one shape, sometimes another. Though chased and fired at, horse and rider were never harmed. Sometimes in the same likeness in which it had loomed through the battle-smoke of Bennington, sometimes in the shape of the enemy of mankind, sometimes as a living skeleton gleaming in fire through the darkness, every night when the moon was absent the specter appeared.

The Indians were thoroughly cowed from the first when a white female figure was seen on the croup of the black horse, misty and ghost-like, as it happened at the first visit. The wanton murder of poor Jenny McCrea recurred to their minds and they guiltily believed that her ghost was haunting them.

When the last Indian had fled, there was a short respite from this persecution of the outposts, only to return in a new form.

Since the flight of St. Leger, the English soldiery, harassed as they were by short commons in the day were deprived of sleep during the night by constant alarms. When the camp was at its quietest, and all were hoping for a quiet night, suddenly would come the blast of a horn, followed by shouts and shots, and they would see a squad of fiery figures on fiery horses galloping through the pickets, cutting down the surprised soldiers.

Before a resistance could be organized the unearthly visitors would disappear, leaving their marks in the shape of two or three vedettes or sentries shot down. The attacks were never serious, never pushed far, but they occurred every night, sometimes in one quarter, sometimes in another, always coming suddenly and without a moment's warning, till the pickets began to become demoralized, and the men could hardly be induced to stand guard at any distance from the camp.

It was under these circumstances that Colonel Butler, the partisan, offered his services at the council of war to solve the mystery of the demon and his crew.

General Burgoyne was the first to break the silence that ensued on Butler's speech.

"Gentlemen, you have heard Colonel Butler. You know the risk. We have but one squadron of cavalry left. Shall we venture it? General Fraser, are you in favor of a risk?"

"I am," replied the officer addressed.

"And you, Philips?"

"Decidedly."

"And you, baron?"

"Certainly. If we lose them, we are no worse off, behind our works. If we stop the enemy from annoying us, we have gained something."

"Enough, gentlemen. Sir Francis Clark will accompany Colonel Butler, and guide the party to the place to which he tracked the strange being when he followed him, a few weeks ago. The council is dismissed."

On the afternoon of the 5th October, a strong party of dragoons left the English camp headed by the bold and wary partisan who has figured in our pages under so many different names, in reality the most trusty spy and best leader of Indians in the pay of Burgoyne. Of his former history even his commander knew nothing, save that he had joined to volunteer his services at the taking of Ticonderoga.

Some baleful spirit seemed now to animate the partisan, urging him on to feverish eagerness, as he hurried the departure of the dragoons, and rode off, accompanied by Sir Francis Clark. The sound of the American bands behind Gates's intrenchments, could be distinctly heard; for, since the battle of the 19th September, the English had moved forward to within cannon-shot of the American lines, where they had fortified themselves.

Butler shook his clinched hand at the enemy's quarters with a look of rage, muttering to Clark as he rode away:

"Let them blow and whistle, Clark. Once give me back my Indians, and we'll soon sweep them out of the path."

"If we can not do it without Indian help," said the aide-de-camp, coldly, "I see but little chance of success. The Indians are but unreliable cattle at the best."

Clark was by no means an admirer of Butler or his allies. In common with most of the cultivated English officers, he felt a strong repugnance to the employment of such barbarous allies.

Butler laughed sardonically.

"Ay, ay, that's the way they all talk when ill-luck falls on a man. I am no leader of pipe-clayed grenadiers, and you look down on me. But by the light of Heaven, Sir Francis, once let me get my warriors back, with my old corps of rangers, and I'll show you that Indians can fight."

The officer made no answer, and they rode on into the woods, till they struck the blaze that Sir Francis had made with his sword, which they followed without much difficulty.

Once on the track, the partisan took the lead at a rapid pace. His keen and practiced eye read the signs of the forest with far more ease than the aide-de-camp, even though the latter was following his own trail. The length of time since the blaze was made, and the faint nature of the marks would have puzzled the officer not a little, but to the partisan the task was but child's play.

On they went at a pace of seven or eight miles an hour, through the rapidly darkening woods, till they found themselves, at sunset, in a country broken by ravines, where the blaze abruptly ended before a thicket of wild raspberries, which hid the entrance to a narrow gorge in the side of a hill.

Here Butler dismounted, and examined the vicinity carefully, when he announced to the aide-de-camp that a party of Indians were in the vicinity, and that he was going to seek them out and call them to his assistance.

The marks of moccasins had not deceived him. When he sounded a peculiar call on his turkey-bone whistle, it was answered almost immediately, and, soon after, a war-party of Mohawks made its appearance.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE DEMON'S HAUNT.

THE Mohawks proved to be a small party who had fled from Burgoyne, and when they were informed of the errand on which the white men had visited that lonely spot, one and all expressed unbounded terror. In coming into the wilderness they had hoped to escape the presence of the demon whose appearance they associated with Vermont and Stillwater.

When they were told by Butler of the scene which he himself had witnessed on that very spot—the one described in the commencement of our tale—and learned that the Mountain Demon had frequently made his appearance in those very woods, had in fact been tracked thither, the bravest warriors trembled, and be-

gan to look apprehensively around them, to see.

Butler checked them from flight with consummate craft.

"Whither would my brothers fly?" he asked. "If this be a demon, he will catch you in the woods; and when was he known to spare a Mohawk? With us lies your safety. I am the Night Hawk, that sees in the thick shades, and my spirit is more powerful than his. Remain with us, and I will show you that all the demons of wood and mountain cannot frighten the Night Hawk. This is a cunning medicine-man of the rebels, but I also am a cunning medicine-man, and I will show you that I am stronger than he."

This address reassured the warriors somewhat. They had a profound respect for the partisan, and the mere fact of his coming there expressly to solve the mystery of the demon argued that he had no fear of him. When the Night Hawk called on them to follow him, they made no more objections and the party advanced.

The dragoons dismounted—part of them—and gave up their horses to the third of their companions, who remained in the saddle, under Sir Francis, to guard the horses. The men on foot, looking to their muskets, and fastening their sabers to the saddle, under Butler's orders, formed in rear of the Indians, both to support them and to guard against their flight.

Then, with the partisan at their head, they advanced to the hollow tree in which the demon had once disappeared, which, as Butler had surmised, proved to be the entrance to a cavern.

Looking into the hollow, a gulf of unknown depth appeared below them, and the partisan hesitated a moment. Then he drew back and called for a lantern. Several had been brought, and they were quickly lighted, when Butler, boldly taking the initiative, leaped down the cavity and found himself on firm ground, not six feet from the surface.

With a cheery call, he held up the lantern to his followers, and disclosed the entrance to a rude flight of steps, cut downward into the earth, in a bed of solid rock. In a few moments an Indian chief followed, trembling visibly, but resolved not to give way before the white men.

Fastening the lantern to his belt, and holding his rifle ready for use, the resolute partisan slowly descended the steps, emerging at last into a lofty hall, crusted with stalactites, on which the light of the lantern flashed as it on a wall of diamonds.

He heard the soft, moccasined footsteps of the Indians, then the heavy clatter of spurs, as the dragoons descended, and at last the whole party entered the chamber, and stood gazing in wonder around them.

All were much more at their ease now. There were no signs of the demon as yet, and of caves all had heard.

Butler now made a fresh disposition of his forces. Of lanterns there were seven, of that kind called bull's-eyes, and he ordered the soldiers bearing them to form a line behind him and advance abreast, casting a broad glare ahead. He knew that the Indians would not dare to leave him in the thick darkness of that cave.

They advanced through the long chamber, the only sounds audible being their own footsteps, and the hurried breathing of the excited men. Presently a narrow passage compelled them to stoop low and go in single file over a broken, crooked path, till they emerged into a second chamber, larger than the first, and the light of the lanterns came back to them from the mirror-like surface of a black pool, into which Butler had nearly fallen.

As he recovered himself with an involuntary exclamation, a loud, mocking peal of laughter sounded from the roof above them, and the sound, repeated by the echoes, came with a terrible effect to the ears of the explorers. As if to test their nerves to the utmost, there was a rushing in the air, close by, and a swarm of bats swished past them, brushing them with their wings and tangling in the long hair of several dragoons.

The confusion in the narrow passage was indescribable. The German dragoons cursed in guttural accents, the Indians uttered their startled "Ugh!" and all struggled together to free, jammed up against the rocks.

The thundering voice of Butler recalled them to their senses:

"Halt, fools!" shouted the enraged partisan. "Do ye fear the empty laugh of a single man, and a few bats? Forward, and keep your rifles

ready! We are hunting this juggler to his hole at last. He is here. Follow me, and we'll soon find out."

No sooner had he finished than the same demoniac peal of laughter echoed through the cave, seeming to come from overhead. The bold partisan shouted defiantly back, and his men, reassured, followed him onward into the cave, skirting the black lake as they went. It was a large chamber in which they found themselves, but its border was very narrow round the lake. After the second peal of laughter, all was silence.

Butler paused at a place where the white rock shelved out into the water making a broader platform. He cast the light of his lantern all round the cave, but could see no further path on the shore. The inky waters came up to the platform and another step would only plunge them into its icy depths.

Then he turned his gaze on the wall of rock and perceived a rude pathway leading up in a zigzag and reaching a platform above that on which he stood. Beyond it was a great black opening in the midst of which stood a sheeted ghost, gleaming snow white against the black background with all the startled effect of reality.

For a moment the blood rushed to the heart of the bold partisan, so weird was the vision. The men behind him had also caught sight of the fearful figure and uttered low exclamations of terror. Butler was the first to recover.

"Follow me, fools," he said. "'Tis only a stalactite after all. See it glitter."

"Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!"

Again the fearful hollow laugh sounded above them, with its peculiarly ghastly mockery, and the echoes in the cave repeated the sound again and again, till it seemed as if a legion of demons was loose.

But Butler was not to be longer daunted by sounds, however fearful. Up the steep path he rushed, rifle in hand, toward the white figure in the gloomy portal, and his men after a little hesitation followed him.

Hardly had they reached the top, than a bright glare of crimson fire illuminated the rocky cavern, making everything bright as day, and turning the whole vast chamber into a palace of jewels.

The glare came from a column of red flame that shot up in the midst of the dark archway, where the great white stalactite shone out with startling vividness.

Not a living creature was visible before them, but the column of flame made it certain that some one must be near by to have lighted it. Butler rushed forward, calling to his men to follow, and then suddenly recoiled, as three fiery figures sprang out from the wall and rushed forward waving burning swords that shone with blue flames.

The effect was instantaneous on all but Butler. The Indians yelled with terror and plunged down the path, running headlong for the opening by the merciful light of the flame. The dragoons fired a hasty random volley with their rifles and fled after them, and the next moment out went the light and the three fiery figures went sailing through the air over the black lake like birds of hell, uttering the same fearful screeches that had driven the savages to flight.

In a moment more Butler was alone on the platform, and one of the fiery figures, waving its wings, swooped down on him, and striking him with unmistakably solid feet, sent him headlong into the black lake with a splash.

Then with a final peal of demoniac laughter all three of the apparitions circled back to the rock and disappeared, leaving Indians and dragoons to find their way out as they could.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE LAST BATTLE.

A SILENT and dejected cavalcade was slowly emerging from the woods behind Burgoyne's quarters, on the morning of the 7th of October. It was the returning party under Butler, disappointed of their aim, beaten and dispirited.

The partisan, after his ducking in the lake and the flight of his men, had certainly evinced rare courage, for he had actually returned to the assault on the following morning, provided with a quantity of torches of flaring pitch pine.

Under the stimulus of plenty of light, the dragoons had behaved better, although nothing could induce the Indians to venture back. They had thoroughly explored the first and second caves without any further annoyance, but neither did they make any more discoveries. By what means the three strange apparitions

had managed to execute their flight over the lake, remained a mystery, but they had evidently vanished, for not a trace of living creature, save bats, was found.

Chamber after chamber, grand, beautiful, grotesque, and horrible, was passed, but they heard no more the mocking echo of demoniac laughter.

Full of rage and disappointment, Butler returned to the outer air, to find that his Indians, useless and superstitious as they were underground, had made an important discovery by the light of day, outside the limits of the cavern.

The tracks of three horses were found, quite fresh, at a little distance from the cave-mouth, and they led toward the camp of Burgoyne, from another ravine.

The back trail, when followed, led to another opening in the hillside, and it became evident that the tenants of the cave, human or supernatural, had escaped.

The brow of the partisan grew dark and gloomy when he heard the news, but he made no remark. Ever since the plunge into the subterranean lake, he had been much depressed in spirits, and now it was with sullen apathy that he agreed to the proposal of Sir Francis Clark, and led the return to Burgoyne's camp.

The distance was so great—nearly forty miles—and their pace so slow, that it was not till the dawn of the following day that they came in sight of the English army, and started to hear the first guns of the decisive battle of Bemis's Heights, better known as Saratoga.

Sir Francis Clark started when he heard the sound, and when a second report came booming through the woods, he gathered up his reins, turned to Butler hastily and said:

"Excuse me, colonel. Bring on the party as slowly as you like. My duty takes me to the general."

Then waving his hand, he struck spurs into his thoroughbred, and galloped off down the road, at full speed, toward the sound of the distant firing.

Butler hardly seemed to notice his departure or the firing. The whole air of the man was that of gloomy depression, with a certain expectant apprehensive look, as if fearing coming evil. He rode slowly on, while the sound of the cannon became more frequent, sounding dull and hollow behind the encircling woods.

The men behind him conversed together in whispers; they did not seem to have the eagerness of Sir Francis Clark to go into the battle. Old soldiers seldom do. They know too well what is coming. The German dragoons that followed Butler were all veterans, and though they would go into any danger unmurmuringly, there was a kind of stolid caution about them that prevented any eagerness.

Besides, the gradual approach, at a slow pace, to a battle, that one hears, but cannot see, especially if the prospect is limited by woods in all directions, is peculiarly depressing to the holdest spirits, and causes unwonted silence to most men, who would march gayly on, in an open country.

Thus the dragoons following Butler ceased to converse at all, and pressed silently on behind their dogged leader, who took his way forward on the narrow, dusty road, the boom of guns growing more and more frequent, and answered by the more distant reports of the cannon from the intrenchments of Gates.

At last an opening appeared in the trees ahead, and a white cloud of smoke was visible hanging in the air over a stubble field, beyond which a little brown house nestled in the corner of a wood.

The sight seemed to have an effect on Butler which hearing had failed to produce. Instinctively he gathered up his reins and quickened his pace, while his eye roamed over the battle-field with a practiced glance. It was evident to a soldier that no serious fighting had yet begun, for the guns were firing at regular intervals, and the scarlet lines of the grenadiers stood behind them, while the dark-green masses of the Hessians were scattered over the ground to the left, near the glaring stacks of arms.

On the American side all was quiet. No motion could be perceived behind the dark curtain of the woods, flecked with gold and crimson as it was, in the tints of Indian-summer.

Occasionally, however, the distant report of a heavy gun was followed by the whirr and hum of a round shot, which came high over the trees and plunged into the ground in front of the British lines.

"Artillery duel—much noise and no damage," muttered Butler in a tone of scorn as he watched

the scene. "If I had my will they would try a night-attack. The cursed Yankees can beat them at shooting."

His course led him toward the rear of the British, and he was nearing the line when something caught his quick eye, and he halted.

Three figures on horseback were riding slowly toward the American lines in a hollow that hid them from British view, and he recognized them in an instant.

One wore the broad-plumed hat and strange, antique dress of the mysterious being that had haunted him so long, the second was Adrian Schuyler, in his gay hussar trappings, and the third was the same girl who had, a month or two before, caused such a shock to the generally immovable courage of the partisan.

Butler uttered a low, inexpressibly savage blasphemy as he looked at the three figures riding so tranquilly past, with their backs toward him, and evidently unconscious of his presence.

"Now," he muttered, in a tone of intense eagerness, "now I have them at last, in daylight, and they shall fool me no longer. What if the girl does wear her face? He, at least, I know and hate. I have shamed him once, and now I'll have sweet revenge, if I lose life for it."

He turned in his saddle and drew his sword.

"Men," he said, in a low voice, "yonder are three rebel spies. Follow me and take them, if it costs us all our heads. Will you come?"

In a moment twenty swords were out, and the soldiers answered him with eager assent.

"Charge!" shouted Butler, driving in his spurs, and away he went at full speed after the three quiet equestrians.

The tall cavalier in the Louis XIV. dress turned quietly in his saddle when he heard the thunder of hoofs on the road behind him, and spoke a few words to his companions, with a gesture of contempt.

Then, as Butler came within a hundred yards, the two black horses and the dapple-gray started at a tremendous rate of speed, which speedily distanced the lumbering dragoons, and taxed the utmost exertions of the steed of the partisan himself, to maintain his place.

In vain he plied his spurs. His horse was doing its best, and nothing could be gained. Presently the road gave a turn round the wood, and they came in sight of the American lines, as also within gunshot of a long rank of horsemen in the white frocks of Morgan's riflemen. The tall cavalier pulled up, and turned to meet Butler, at that sight, while Adrian and Diana rode on.

The dogged courage of the partisan never failed him, though his men were not within supporting distance. He thundered on to meet the stranger, and broadsword and long rapier met with a savage clang.

"Alphonse de Cavannes! I have you at last!"

"Pierce Harley, your time is come!"

Hissing the fierce greetings between their teeth, the combatants closed in a mortal struggle.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SKIRMISH.

It was evident that both men recognized each other as old enemies, for they met with a ferocity that told of undying hate. The long rapier and the broadsword clashed together and played in circles of angry light, and the horses wheeled and bounded, obedient to hand and heel, as if they shared every wish of their masters.

The combatants were by no means unequally matched. The dark stranger with the pallid face was much the taller, but his long, lean frame lacked the compactness and solid force of the Herculean partisan. The inferiority in strength was fully made up by an activity and fierce energy that bordered on the supernatural, and the stranger fought with all the vigor of the demon he had so successfully personated.

The partisan, without the lightning velocity and energy of the other, had yet a towering strength, joined to consummate skill with his weapon, that made him a terrible antagonist. His horse was much heavier than that of his foe, and seemed to be equally well trained. Whenever they clashed together, the heavy steed of Butler sent the slight black charger reeling from the shock, and the fierce blows of the partisan beat down the guard of the unknown at every encounter.

The pale cavalier, however, found his revenge in the more insidious and deadly thrusts, which he found occasion to deliver at intervals, with his longer and lighter weapon; and twice did he draw blood with his point, while he received in return a single slash only, which fell short of its full intention, and plowed a long gash in his thigh, with the point of the broadsword.

All these cuts and points passed in the space of half a minute, during which the two men fought

with a fury that must have completely exhausted them in a short time.

Then the combat was interrupted as suddenly as it had begun, by the thunder of hoofs close by, as the German dragoons swept down on the contending parties, with loud hurrahs, in a cloud of dust!

He who had been called De Cavannes broke away from his enemy as the dragoons rushed in, and was soon surrounded with foes, whom he handled with a coolness and vigor that showed the great difference between them and their leader. Then came a counter rush of hoofs, with the cracking of rifles and the whistle of bullets, and down galloped a troop of Morgan's redoubted Mounted Rifles, yelling their war-cry.

In the midst of the new-comers rode the dashing hussar, Adrian Schuyler, his pelisse flying behind him, his saber waving, while the dapple-gray charger swept on like a storm-gust.

In the first assault his sword clashed against that of a German dragoon, and then darted through a man's body up to the hilt like a flash. The hussar's horse, rushing on, actually bore the poor wretch out of his saddle by the leverage of the sword, and Adrian was not able to extricate it in time to guard a blow from one of the German's comrades. The long, straight broadsword, whistling as it came, descended on the summit of the tall fur cap, and clove it down on the hussar's skull with crushing force, stunning him so that he fell over on his saddle-bow, confused and senseless. How he might have fared is doubtful, had not De Cavannes, at the same moment, caught the dragoon across the face with a backhanded slash of his long keen sword that divided his nose, and sent him reeling back in his saddle, giving Adrian time to recover himself.

Then the contest waxed furious.

Morgan's men were superior in numbers to the dragoons, but their arms were by no means equal to those of the others in a close fight on horseback. Few had any but rifles and pistols, and those few who carried short hangers knew but little of their use, compared to the well-instructed German swordsmen.

On the other hand, their numbers and courage told in their favor. Many clubbed their rifles, and laid about them with a vigor that laughed at the broad-swords. Where a man was cut down or run through, some comrade would fell his slayer with the butt of his rifle.

Only the terrible partisan, Butler, made his heavy sword of more weight than the clubbed rifle. He raged through the fight, driving back the stoutest riflemen like children with his enormous strength. Meeting Adrian Schuyler, when the press prevented maneuvering, he beat down his guard, and felled him to the earth with a single stroke, then turned to face De Cavannes, who was making toward him through the swaying crowd.

But such savage fighting could not last long. Strong and brave as were the dragoons, the increasing numbers of Morgan's men bore down their opposition by sheer weight of horse-flesh, and the whole mass drove down toward Burgoyne's lines, struggling and shouting, but too closely packed to allow the use of weapons of any size.

Then, at last, the hunting-knives of the riflemen came into play, and they made it too hot for the dragoons, who, one by one, broke out of the fight, and fled toward the English army, pursued by the shouting riflemen.

Even the generally indomitable Butler was fain to turn his horse, his vengeance unsatisfied, and quit a fight in which he had only overthrown one of his enemies.

Adrian Schuyler, stunned and bleeding from a head wound, scrambled to his feet in the dusty road, and beheld De Cavannes, dismounted, and approaching him as if to assist him.

It seemed as if some mutual understanding existed between the two, however originating, for Adrian evinced no surprise at the other's coming. He staggered slightly and put his hand to his head, saying faintly:

"I fear, count, that I have not done you credit to-day. The villain has escaped, and 'tis my fault."

The mysterious stranger smiled gravely, as he answered:

"Boy, you did your best, but fate must be fulfilled. He will not escape forever. No! If he did, I should almost believe there is no God of justice."

Seen by the light of the day, the strange being was of noble figure. His great height and spare make did not detract from, but rather added to the air of mystery and dignity that surrounded him. His pallid face, not now distorted by assumed expressions, was noble and intellectual in outline, and the antique dress that he wore, with the flowing, black, full-bottomed wig, added to the majesty of his looks, while the long, black mustache evinced that its wearer must have been a cavalry officer, that facial ornament being peculiar to the mounted service, in those days.

"Are you badly hurt, *mon ami*?" he asked, with a slight French accent.

"I don't know," said Adrian, faintly. "I feel stupid and weak, but there is little pain. I think I have a cut on the head."

De Cavannes advanced and examined the wound of the other with great care, and nodded his head as if reassured.

"There is no great harm done," he said. "The sword must have turned in his hand, and your cap helped you. But you cannot go into battle to-day. Your general has been superseded by the vain fool, Gates. Let us depart. When the battle is over it will be time to see to our purpose."

Slowly he led the hussar away to his horse just as the first scattering rifle-shots told that the contest was opening in earnest, and when the volleys of

musketry pealed out from the wheat-fields, Adrian Schuyler was resting by a spring in the forest, while the beautiful Diana was bathing his head and binding up his wounds.

It is not our purpose to describe the battle of Saratoga in these pages. That has been well done in the glowing pages of Irving, Headley, and Lossing; and to attempt the task were but a repetition of their words. Let the reader imagine the increasing thunder of answering guns, the rapid roll of the volleys, and the charging cheer of the English, Hessian, and Yankee volunteer, the field wrapped in bluish clouds of smoke, where the fierce powder-smell stings the nostrils, and the spiteful red flashes answer each other out of the haze, where the bullets hiss and the round shot hum, while the grape-shot come by with a heavy swish, and in the midst of all, wild Arnold rages up and down like a lion at bay, driven to frenzy by his foes.

Alas for Arnold, that his greatest and most glorious field should have been his last! Nevermore to direct the tide of victory thereafter, on that stricken field he leaped to a height of glory, from whence, three years later, he was to plunge into an abyss of infamy covered with the curses of honest men, his only hope of mercy lying in friendly oblivion.

Let the field of Saratoga go by, with its well-known result, while we turn to the few characters of our story around whom our plot has revolved, and draw the shifting drama to a close.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE CAPITULATION.

In the room of a farm-house in the American lines near Saratoga, a large gathering of officers was assembled. The scarlet of the British, the dark-green of the Hessian, and the homely blue and buff of the American officers mingled in friendly union for the first time.

The British officers looked gloomy and depressed, while the Americans treated them with marked courtesy and consideration. A carriage rolled up to the door of the farm-house, attended by a single dragoon, and a lady with two little children was helped out by one of the American officers, whose plain uniform bore no distinctive marks of rank.

This same officer had a peculiarly kind and benevolent expression on his face. He took up the frightened little ones in his arms as readily as if he had been their proper parent, kissed them affectionately, and turned to welcome the mother with all the kindly courtesy of a gentleman of the old school.

The lady was the Baroness Reidesel, wife of the Hessian commander, and her heart was at once won to the kind stranger.

"Oh, sir," she said, impulsively, "you are very, very kind, to us who have injured you so much."

"Dear madam," said the stranger, "that was but the fortune of war. You are trembling. Do not be alarmed, I pray you. Probably it may be somewhat embarrassing to you to be the only lady in such a large company of gentlemen. Pray let me take you and the children to my tent, where I will try to entertain you as best I can."

The tears rushed to the eyes of the lady, as she said:

"Oh, sir, you must be a husband and father to show us so much kindness. Tell me only to whom I am indebted."

"The debt is mine, madam," said the officer, politely. "I am General Schuyler."

And indeed it was that noblest of all heroes of the Revolution, after Washington, the general to whose genius the capture of Burgoyne was owing, and who was yet superseded in the hour of his triumph by the intrigues of the unscrupulous Gates, around whose brows the laurels were placed that really belonged to Schuyler. The baroness in her memoirs has left us this little incident, illustrative of the real nobility of the man.

In Schuyler's tent, in which the baroness soon found herself, she was greeted with respectful cordiality by a young lady, one of the most beautiful creatures she had ever seen, who was introduced to her by the general as "Mademoiselle Diane de Cavannes, the betrothed wife of my cousin, Captain Schuyler."

Sitting down to dinner, the baroness was soon after introduced to a remarkably handsome young officer of hussars, as the cousin in question, who entered while they were at table.

The conversation was carried on indifferently in English, German and French, for every one at table seemed to be a good linguist, and before half an hour had passed the baroness felt as happy as if she had been among intimate friends instead of being, as she really was, in an enemy's camp, her husband and all his army prisoners.

While they were still at table, however, an incident occurred which showed that war was not at rest entirely.

A disturbance was heard outside, some shouting, the reports of two muskets, followed by the gallop of a horse near the tent.

Adrian Schuyler jumped up at a signal from the general, and went out to see what was the matter. The baroness, full of vague fears, as was natural to a lady in her lonely position, remained silent and absent-minded, in spite of the assiduous attentions of her host and Mademoiselle de Cavannes to continue the conversation.

It was not long, however, before she was reassured by the entrance of Adrian, who was accompanied by Baron Reidesel himself.

"Ah, *mon ami*," exclaimed the anxious wife, "I feared some terrible thing had happened to thee."

The baron, after bowing to General Schuyler, whom he seemed to know, explained the disturbance in a few words.

It seemed that Burgoyne and his principal officers had been dining with Gates and his staff, and that all were somewhat the worse for wine, as was common in those days of hard drinking.

That one of Burgoyne's officers, who, it appeared, had held an independent command among the rangers and Indians attached to the expedition, had distinguished himself by the depth of his potations which yet had no apparent effect on him save to make him more sullen and reserved.

"He was always a surly fellow, that Butler," said the baron; "and none of us had liked him much, but he was a valuable officer at collecting intelligence and planning surprises, and brought us in more news than all our scouts, so Sir John tolerated him. Once or twice, I believe he went out as a spy among your people, general. Pretty soon, a dispute arose at table about that unfortunate affair of Miss McCrea, and although both generals tried to stop it, words waxed high. Then on a sudden this Butler chimed in with the disputants in the most insulting manner, and the end of it was that he gave the lie direct to Colonel Morgan of the Rifles. One of Morgan's officers, who sat next to Butler, maddened by his potations, so far forgot himself as to strike Butler. I shall never forget the scene that followed. Butler caught up a carving-knife, and before any one could interfere he literally hacked the other to pieces. Then with a savage curse, he flung the knife at Gates, rushed from the house, knocking down two officers that tried to stop him, as if they were children, sprung on the horse of Gates himself, that stood by the door, and actually escaped. I tell you, general, that sobered us all. Such an affair I never saw before, nor hope to again. It has cured me of deep drinking for a long while."

Even as he was finishing, a tall gentleman entered the tent, with a hasty apology, went up to Schuyler and whispered in his ear. The general looked grave and troubled but he answered, hastily:

"Certainly, count, certainly. I have no command here, and Adrian's duties are merely honorary. He can go."

The Count de Cavannes, for it was none other, turned to Adrian Schuyler and the young lady, who was known as Diane de Cavannes, and spoke rapidly in French:

"My children, we must be in the saddle in an hour. The enemy of my house is at large, and I have sworn never to rest till he is past doing further mischief. Make your excuses and follow."

Then, with a hurried bow to the rest of the company that told of the high-bred courtesy that even haste could not extinguish, the mysterious count left the tent.

Baron Reidesel remained staring at the tent door in blank surprise after his departure for some minutes. Then he turned to Schuyler and asked, in a low voice:

"Excuse the question, Monsieur le General, but who is that tall gentleman that has gone out?"

"The Count de Cavannes, father to this young lady," said the general, with a wave of his hand toward mademoiselle.

"And, excuse me, does he hold a commission in your forces?"

"That is a question, baron, I cannot in honor answer," said the other, gravely. "He is a true friend to our cause, I will say."

"Eh, *mon Dieu*, it is explained, then," muttered the baron. "He is an agent of the Secret Service."

Schuyler smiled but made no answer, and after fidgeting for some minutes, the baron resumed:

"Will you excuse one more question?"

"Certainly, baron. If I can answer, I will."

"The count, is he a—well, a conjurer?"

"I can answer that," interposed Diana, who had listened to the colloquy with an amused smile. "My father was a member of the French Academy of Sciences, baron, and a pupil of the great Cagliostro himself. Have you seen him before, that you ask?"

"*Mon Dieu*, mademoiselle, I should think I had. Did he not enter the quarters of Burgoyne himself in spite of his sentries and frighten us all out of our senses, in the likeness of the king of evil himself?"

To his surprise, both Adrian and Diana burst into a hearty laugh, and the former said:

"I do not wonder, baron. The count frightened me once, in a way I shall never forget. But now I know him, let me say that a more honorable and braver gentleman never made use of the artifices of war to deceive and entrap an enemy. Farewell, baron. The day will come when you will know and respect De Cavannes as I do."

And he left the tent with Diana.

CHAPTER XX.

THE MOUNTAIN HOME.

ONCE more we are in Vermont, in the little valley scooped in the side of the Haunted Hill. The rough stone cottage still stands in the middle of the clearing, but it is no longer lonely. Several horses are tied to the trees around, two of them jet-black, the rest caparisoned chargers, in the midst of which the dapple-gray steed of Adrian Schuyler is noticed. Several rangers were lounging about, and in the hut, and the smoke curls up from the wide chimney, showing blue amid the silvery haze of Indian summer.

But a feature has been added to the scene since we were first there. It is not the vivid dyes of autumn alone. The mountain sides glow with crimson and gold, but that is not all.

The change consists in the fact that a lofty portal has been revealed, cut into the precipice that borders one side of the glade, while the cavern to which it gives entrance, instead of being dark, is illuminated from within, and shows as bright as day.

No rough, damp cavern is it either, but a lofty apartment, the rocks hidden with hangings of white and crimson cloth, while within, gathered around a table, are General Schuyler, the Count de Cavannes, Adrian, and Diana, at the close of a dinner, waited on by black servants.

The general holds up his glass to the light and addresses De Cavannes, saying:

"Count, to your future life. May it be happier than the past. It is time to redeem your promise, and tell your children all."

The count's face was grave and sad as he replied:

"Philip, you say true, but you cannot tell what it is to me to harrow up those recollections. Still, it must be done, for I have promised."

Then turning to the young people, who were respectfully listening, he addressed them:

"Adrian Schuyler, I have trusted thee as I never have trusted living man since—since—something happened in my past life. What that was, thou shalt learn. I trusted thee, not alone for thine honest face, but for the name thou bearest. Thy cousin Philip and I were once fellow-students and travelers, and I never knew one of his blood that was a traitor. Diana, my daughter, thou hast, for many a year, held more fear than love to thy father. Now thou shalt learn the cause that drove me to the wilderness, and made of me, once as frank as the day, the gloomy hater of my kind that I was before Adrian came to us, to bring light from the outer world."

Then, while his audience gathered round him, hanging with intense interest on his words, the count told them the story of his life, which we shall epitomize as briefly as possible.

Alphonse de Cavannes, count in France, baron in Germany, and even duke of a small Italian province, was, at thirty, an object of envy to half of Europe, for his riches and social position. Descended from a family which united the best bloods of three kingdoms, he inherited vast estates in all, greatest of all in France. Such was the frank generosity of his nature, that his parasites were numerous, but to none of them had he shown so much kindness as to a young English officer, a scion of the noble house of Oxford, Pierce Harley by name. This youth had been taken prisoner by the count in the famous battle of Fontenoy, thirty-two years before the date of our tale, and his captor, instead of leaving him as he well might have done, to the fate of an officer on parole, on scanty pay, had taken him into his own house in Paris, and treated him with the kindness of a brother. He had been induced to this course chiefly from the finding that Harley was a distant relation of the young Countess de Cavannes, who was, by birth, English, and whom her husband positively adored. Young Harley, then a handsome, athletic young fellow, had professed himself extremely grateful for this kindness. Being a younger son, without fortune, the friendship of the great French lord was of much value to him. When peace was concluded, moreover, instead of allowing Harley to go back to England, the generous count insisted on his resigning his commission, and remaining in France as steward of all De Cavannes's estates, everywhere treated as the trusted friend of their owner. Harley accepted it, and for twelve years occupied the post, doing exactly as he pleased. It was during this period that Schuyler, then on a visit to Europe, met his old fellow-student, and witnessed, with amazement, the splendor of his establishment. The count was then deep in those expensive scientific experiments to which he owed all his subsequent resources as a conjurer and magician, in company with the celebrated Count Cagliostro. It was Schuyler who induced the count to pay a visit to America, and Harley managed all the details of the expedition, which was made in princely style. On arrival in America, De Cavannes was so much charmed with the beauty and grandeur of the scenery, that he decided that he would buy an estate near Albany, and spend at least a portion of his time there.

It was only then, after twelve years of apparently faithful service on the part of Harley, that De Cavannes discovered that all was not right in his affairs. Expecting to be able to raise money to purchase in America by a mortgage on his French estates, he found to his surprise and dismay, that every acre of land which he held in Europe was already heavily incumbered. Schuyler, whose keen, solid intellect had from the first led him to suspect maladministration on account of the reckless extravagance he had witnessed, persuaded his friend to go to Europe and make a secret investigation of his affairs in company with himself, leaving Harley in America to put the Albany estate in condition. To do this, the generous American himself secretly advanced the purchase-money for the estate, and undertook the task of lulling Harley's suspicions, which the open-hearted count was hardly capable of doing, in the first revulsion of suspicion. To be brief, the scheme was carried out. The countess was left in America under charge of the suspected agent, along with the baby Diana, who had been born a few days previous to the discovery of Harley's monetary faithlessness. Of anything worse than reckless incapacity the count never suspected him.

The friends went to Europe and found that the trusted friend and petted steward, Pierce Harley, had not only robbed his benefactor for his own benefit, but had actually forged his name to mortgages, so that two-thirds of the count's income was swallowed up in paying interest on loans of which he had never reaped any benefit.

De Cavannes, once undeceived, was a changed man. With noble magnanimity he would not take advantage of the people who had been victimized by the forgeries. Neither would he continue to pay

the interest. He took a middle course, conveying all his estates to a board of his creditors to apply the proceeds to the extinction of the principal of these sums that he had never received, and reserving to himself only enough to repay the generous Schuyler and to supply a year's expenses for a small household in America. Then he took passage back, and arrived at Albany with Schuyler to find the country in a state of war, and Howe's expedition to Ticonderoga on foot.

Full of fury at the recent discoveries, he summoned Harley to his presence, informed him in a few stinging words of his estimate of his character, then bid him draw and defend himself. To his surprise, Harley, usually a man of obstinate courage, turned pale, and without a word fled from his presence, while the count, too proud to pursue a wretch so sordid as he deemed him, contented himself with throwing a drinking-cup after him with a force that cut the villain's head as he went. Then the disdainful noble went to seek his wife, whom he had not yet seen.

Then, and then only, did he sound the last depth of Harley's perfidy. The false steward was discovered in the countess's chamber, and she was hanging on his neck, weeping bitterly, while Harley rained kisses on her lips.

Here the count stopped, and his paleness became livid, while his voice sunk to a grating whisper.

"I killed Diana. Do you blame me? I would have killed him, but he left again. I could not let both escape."

There was a dead silence in the room as he paused. A moment later he said in a quiet, almost indifferent tone:

"That night the Indians burned my house to the ground and scalped me, leaving me for dead, and I recognized Pierce Harley for their leader. He had the better of me at every point."

Again there was a dead silence, again the count spoke:

"You found me, Philip, and nursed me to life. You do not wonder that when I recovered I vowed vengeance on Pierce Harley and all his crew of red devils. I have kept the vow well. Twenty long years have I hung on the trail of the Mohawks, now in one place, now in another. I found this cave first, afterward the one near Oriskany. The idea struck me that by keeping the secret of the caves and working on the superstition of the Indians, I might acquire a double power over them. I hid the entrance to this, and no one knew where the other was. It was your help, Philip, that supplied me with the means to personate the demon and frighten the savages with red fire. That and my own activity and caution, sharpened tenfold by woodcraft, taught me how to make myself dreaded and shunned by every warrior of this nation."

But in all that time I never could find Pierce Harley, though I sought him everywhere. Diana shared my solitude after her fourteenth year, and no one in the convent-school at Montreal dreamed, when Mademoiselle De Cavannes left them a finished pupil, that she went to the woods to share the trials of a moody, misanthropical outcast, whose bidding she obeyed with fear and trembling but whose secrets she kept with the true fidelity of a daughter. You little thought, Adrian Schuyler, when you met the simple-seeming girl in rustic tunic, that her innocent air was really a piece of consummate art, and that your cousin Philip knew the whole secret. The bear and the tame deer, the Spanish hounds, the voices in the air, the supernatural figures, they were all very awful to you at first, were they not? But, now that you know all, you do not wonder that I would not trust you before Bennington. I sent you my horse on purpose to test your truth, and you proved a true Schuyler. May you be happy with Diana."

The count had hardly finished his story when there was a noise without. He started up.

"I thought so," he exclaimed, "the scouts have tracked him to earth, and are driving him hither."

The next moment a horseman dashed up to the cave, leaped off his beast, and strode in, bearing a long rifle.

It was the dreaded Butler.

Behind him, at a distance, rode up a dozen rangers.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE PARTISAN'S REVELATION.

THE gloomy-looking partisan crossed the threshold, grounded the butt of his rifle, and faced the count without a word.

De Cavannes rose to his feet, and his eye gleamed as he said:

"I knew you would come. After all, you are no coward, if you are a villain, Pierce."

The partisan laughed sardonically.

"Do you render that much justice to me, Alphonse? You are growing rational. I remember when you would not hear a word, and murdered an innocent woman in your frenzy."

The count shook his head and all the fire died out of his eyes.

"Pierce Harley," he said, "if you could prove that, no living man would be more glad than I to spend the rest of my life in the torments of hell on earth, that I might see her once more, to ask her forgiveness one moment. But it is useless. Traitor and false friend who bit the hand that fed you, it is vain to defend her from what I know."

"Let it pass then," said Butler—or Harley as he must now be called—gloomily. "Your words are true as regards me. You cannot believe what I say about her, of course. Let it pass."

"Tell me then," said the count, doubtfully, "why you came here?"

"To die," was the laconic reply.

De Cavannes laughed scornfully.

"Have you realized that? Why did you not come before? You knew I was not dead, though you once thought I was. The day of Saratoga told you that I was no ghost, if you half suspected before. Did you fear to meet me, that you waited till my rangers drove you from your hut, and chased you here?"

"I did," said Harley, with the same sullen manner.

"I wish you had come alone," said the count, in his grand manner. "It would have saved me the trouble of pitying you, for I do not care to kill a man that fears death."

Again Harley laughed sardonically.

"You are wrong, Alphonse, as wrong as you once were about your wife. I don't fear you. I waited to see if you hated me enough to take trouble for my death."

"And you are satisfied that you deserve it?" said the count, gravely.

"I suppose so, according to one law," returned Harley, coldly. "By the law of vengeance you have your rights. Take them. I'm weary of life."

"Pierce Harley," said the count, solemnly, "my men are round you, and you are doomed to die. In the presence of God, tell the truth. What had I done to you that you should turn traitor to me as you did, trying your best to ruin one who had never done you aught but benefits?"

Harley turned his eyes gloomily round the apartment till they rested on the lovely face of Diana. Then he said:

"You see that girl. As she looks now, thirty-five years ago looked her mother, and I loved her before she ever saw you. You have your answer."

"This is no answer," said the count, fiercely.

"What had I done to you to provoke such treason?"

"I loved Diana Harley, fool. She was my cousin by blood, and I loved her before you saw her. I was poor, you were rich. She went to France, secretly betrothed to me, and she broke her troth, forced to it by Oxford, her father. You knew she did not love you. What do you Frenchmen care for love in a young wife? She loved me first, and I loved her. If I had not, do you think I could have forgiven her the wrong she did me? I did forgive her, when I saw her in Paris, but I swore revenge on you and I have kept my oath."

The count had listened to the other with iron composure, but with perfect courtesy, not seeking to interrupt him in any manner. When Harley had finished there was a short silence, broken by the count.

"Then I am to understand, monsieur, that you do me the honor to avow that you sought my house for the deliberate purpose of destroying my happiness and ruining my wife."

"The man that says that Diana Harley was ruined by me lies," said the partisan, in harsh tones. "I loved her, but you—curse you—had her—she was your wife. From that moment I swore to kill you, but nothing would have tempted me to stain her by so much as one word a maiden or chaste wife might not hear."

De Cavannes, for the first time looked incredulous, and Harley, noticing the look, laughed a strange, hollow, despairing laugh.

"You Frenchmen could not understand that of a cold, brutal Englishman, could you? Fool; in the apathetic seeming hearts of the North, love burns with a fervor you mincing dancing-masters never dreamed of, as white as the furnace flame that melts steel and as pure of dross. I tell you I loved Diana. In that love an angel might have gloriied. It was pure at least. If I sinned it was like Lucifer, not like your gentlemen of the court, who counted every woman fair prey."

Here, for the first time, the count interposed.

"Stop, monsieur; you know better than that with me. Besides, you who boast of your purity in love, what meant that scene I witnessed, Diana in your arms before my very face? Ha, monsieur, does that make you wince?"

The iron firmness which had so far distinguished Harley was indeed giving way to all seeming. The strong man trembled violently, and turned a gaze, half piteous half fierce on the second Diana, whose marvelous likeness to the first had been declared. Then he suddenly ground his teeth and turned on the count with a ferocity that bordered on insanity, while he burst out:

"Ay, glory in it, Alphonse. I ruined you, and you detected me. My defeat and disgrace were complete, and in that disgrace she pitied me and allowed her long-smothered love to burst forth. And I, weak fool that I was, lost control of myself when I saw her tears. In one mad moment I told her all my long love, and that moment was her last. You saw us, and stabbed her. Do you know why I did not kill you then, Alphonse de Cavannes? Because you would have gone to meet her. You were a noble man, then. Now, you have stained your hands with blood, and are doomed. I hate you now, as I always did. Now take my curse and speed to hottest hell, to meet me when I come!"

As he spoke he flung his rifle into the palm of his hand with a clash, and the flash and report instantly followed.

That moment would have been the last of the Count de Cavannes, but for the promptitude of Adrian Schuyler. The active hussar had been watching the partisan keenly, and in the nick of time his saber left its sheath striking up the barrel of the piece, to be plunged the next instant into the very heart of Pierce Harley.

Without a groan, the grim partisan dropped dead, as Diana threw her arms round her father's deliverer with a shriek.

There is but little more to add to our tale now.

The reader will comprehend how Adrian, meeting De Cavannes and Diana at Bennington, and taken into the confidence of the former, had assisted him in the ghostly manifestations in the cavern by the aid of De Cavannes's thorough knowledge of the locality and ropes fixed to some of the stalactites for the purpose of executing their aerial flight over the lake, shining in suits covered with phosphorus.

It only remains to add that Adrian and Diana were married the year after, and departed with the count to Europe. By this time the count's estates had paid off their incumbrances by the rents in the course of twenty years, and De Cavannes was once more a rich man.

He was one of the few nobles of France who took the popular side along with Lafayette during the French Revolution, and lived to see Adrian a general under the empire. But all his subsequent fortunes never wiped out the memories of the past, and he often recounted to his grandchildren the pranks he played the savages in America under the name of BLACK NICK.

THE END.

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